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DAILY BREAD,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

Edited by Rev. Mr. H. C. Adams



BOSTON:
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TWO of these stories have been issued as Tracts in the Practical Series, published by this Association; and it was the great demand for them which led to the preparation of this volume. It is hoped that the usefulness of the tracts may be increased by their being put into a more permanent form, and that the book, while proving attractive and profitable for persons of every age, may also be a valuable addition to our Sunday-school libraries.

The compilation has been made with the assistance of the Ladies' Commission on Sunday-school Books.







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DAILY BREAD.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.







DAILY BREAD.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY REV. EDWARD E. HALE.

[Reprinted from the "Boston Daily Advertiser."]

CHAPTER I.

A QUESTION OF NOURISHMENT.

"AND how is he?" said Robert, as he came in from his day's work, in every moment of which he had thought of his child. He spoke in a whisper to his wife, who met him in the narrow entry at the head of the stairs. And in a whisper she replied.

"He is certainly no worse," said Mary; "the doctor says, maybe a shade better. At least," she said, sitting on the lower step, and holding her husband's hand, and still whispering, — "at least he said that the breathing seemed to him a shade easier, one lung seemed to him a little more free, and that it is now a question of time and nourishment."

"Nourishment?"

"Yes, nourishment,—and I own my heart sunk as he said so. Poor little thing, he loathes the slops, and I told the doctor so. I told him the struggle and fight to get them down his poor little throat gave him more flush and fever than any thing. And then he begged me not to try that again, asked if there were really nothing that the child would take, and suggested every thing so kindly. But the poor little thing, weak as he is, seems to rise up with supernatural strength against them all. I am not sure, though, but perhaps we may do something with the old milk and water; that is really my only hope now, and that is the reason I spoke to you so cheerfully."

Then poor Mary explained more at length that Emily had brought in Dr. Cummings's "Manual" about the use of milk with children, and that they had sent round to the Corlisses', who always had good milk, and had set a pint according to the direction, and had watered it thus and so according to the formula; and that though dear little Jamie had refused the groats and the barley, and I know not what else, that at six he had gladly taken all the watered milk they dared to give him, and that it now had rested on his stomach half an hour, so that she could not but hope that the tide had turned, only she hoped with trembling, because he had so steadily refused cow's milk only the week before.

This rapid review in her entry, of the bulletins of a day, is really the beginning of this Christmas story.

No matter which day it was, — it was a little before Christmas, and one of the shortest days, but I have forgotten which. Enough that the baby, for he was a baby still, just entering his thirteenth month, — enough that he did relish the milk, so carefully measured and prepared, and hour by hour took his little dole of it as if it had come from his mother's breast. Enough that three or four days went by so, the little thing lying so still on his back in his crib, his lips still so blue, and his skin of such deadly color against the white of his pillow; and that, twice a day, as Dr. Morton came in and felt his pulse, and listened to the panting, he smiled and looked pleased, and said, "We are getting on better than I dared expect." Only every time he said, "Does he still relish the milk?" and every time was so pleased to know that he took to it still, and every day he added a teaspoonful or two to the hourly dole; and so poor Mary's heart was lifted day by day.

This lasted till St. Victoria's day. Do you know which day that is? It is the second day before Christmas, and here, properly speaking, the story begins.

CHAPTER II.

ST. VICTORIA'S DAY.

ST. VICTORIA'S day the doctor was full two hours late. Mary was not anxious about this. She was

beginning to feel bravely about the boy, and no longer counted the minutes till she could hear the door-bell ring. When he came, he loitered in the entry below, — or she thought he did. He was long coming up stairs. And, when he came in, she saw that he was excited by something, — was really even then panting for breath.

"I am here at last," he said. "Did you think I should fail you?"

Why no, poor innocent Mary had not thought of any such thing. She had known he would come; and baby was so well that she had not minded his delay.

Morton looked up at the close-drawn shades, which shut out the light, and said, "You did not think of the storm?"

"Storm? no!" said poor Mary. She had noticed, when Robert went to the door at seven and she closed it after him, that some snow was falling. But she had not thought of it again. She had kissed him, told him to keep up good heart, and had come back to her baby.

Then the doctor told her that the storm which had begun before daybreak had been gathering more and more severely; that the drifts were already heavier than he remembered them in all his Boston life; that after half an hour's trial in his sleigh he had been glad to get back to the stable with his horse, and that all he had done since he had done on foot,

with difficulty she could not conceive of. He had been so long down stairs while he brushed the snow off, that he might be fit to come near the child.

"And really, Mrs. Walter, we are doing so well here," he said cheerfully, "that I will not try to come round this afternoon, unless you see a change. If you do, your husband must come up for me, you know. But you will not need me, I am sure."

Mary felt quite brave to think that they should not need him really for twenty-four hours, and said so; and added, with the first smile he had seen for a fortnight: "I do not know anybody to whom it is of less account than to me, whether the streets are blocked or open. Only I am sorry for you."

Poor Mary, how often she thought of that speech, before Christmas day went by! But she did not think of it all through St. Victoria's day. Her husband did not come home to dinner. She did not expect him. The children came from school at two, rejoicing in the long morning session and the half-holiday of the afternoon which had been earned by it. They had some story of their frolic in the snow, and after dinner went quietly away to their little play-room in the attic. And Mary sat with her baby all the afternoon, nor wanted other company. She could count his breathing now, and knew how to time it by the watch, and she knew that it was steadier and slower than it was the day before. And really he almost showed an appetite for the hourly

dole. Her husband was not late. He had taken care of that, and had left the shop an hour early. And as he came in and looked at the child from the other side of the crib, and smiled so cheerfully on her, Mary felt that she could not enough thank God for his mercy.

CHAPTER III.

ST. VICTORIA'S DAY IN THE COUNTRY.

FIVE-AND-TWENTY miles away was another mother, with a baby born the same day as Jamie. Mary had never heard of her and never has heard of her, and, unless she reads this story, never will hear of her till they meet together in the other home, look each other in the face, and know as they are known. Yet their two lives, as you shall see, are twisted together, as indeed are all lives, only they do not know it, — as how should they ?

A great day for Huldah Stevens was this St. Victoria's day. Not that she knew its name more than Mary did. Indeed, it was only of late years that Huldah Stevens had cared much for keeping Christmas day. But of late years they had all thought of it more ; and, this year, on Thanksgiving day, at old Mr. Stevens's, after great joking about the young people's housekeeping, it had been determined, with some banter, that the same party should meet with

John and Huldah on Christmas eve, with all Huldah's side of the house besides, to a late dinner or early supper, as the guests might please to call it. Little difference between the meals, indeed, was there ever in the profusion of these country homes. The men folks were seldom at home at the noonday meal, call it what you will; for they were all in the milk business, as you will see. And, what with collecting the milk from the hill-farms, on the one hand, and then carrying it for delivery at the three-o'clock morning milk-train, on the other hand, any hours which you, dear reader, might consider systematic, or of course in country life, were certainly always set aside. But, after much conference, as I have said, it had been determined at the Thanksgiving party that all hands of both families should meet at John and Huldah's as near three o'clock as they could the day before Christmas; and then and there Huldah was to show her powers in entertaining, at her first state family party.

So this St. Victoria's day was a great day of preparation for Huldah, if she had only known its name, as she did not. For she was of the kind which prepares in time, not of the kind that is caught out when the company come, with the work half done. And as John started on his collection beat that morning at about the hour Robert, in town, kissed Mary good-by, Huldah stood on the step with him, and looked with satisfaction on the gathering snow,

because it would make better sleighing the next day for her father and mother to come over. She charged him not to forget her box of raisins when he came back, and to ask at the express if any thing came up from town, bade him good-by, and turned back into the house, not wholly dissatisfied to be almost alone. She washed her baby, gave her her first lunch, and put her to bed. Then, with the coast fairly clear, — what woman does not enjoy a clear coast, if it only be early enough in the morning? — she dipped boldly and wisely into her flour-barrel stripped her plump round arms to their work, and began on the pie-crust which was to appear to-morrow in the fivefold forms of apple, cranberry, Marlborough, mince, and squash, careful and discriminating in the nice chemistry of her mixtures and the nice manipulations of her handicraft, but in no wise dreading the issue. A long, active, lively morning she had of it. Not dissatisfied with the stages of her work, step by step she advanced, stage by stage she attained of the elaborate plan which was well laid out in her head, but of course had never been intrusted to words, far less to telltale paper. From the oven at last came the pies, — and she was satisfied with the color; from the other oven came the turkey, which she proposed to have cold, as a relay, or *pièce de résistance*, for any who might not be at hand at the right moment for dinner. Into the empty oven went the clove-blossoming ham, which,

as it boiled, had given the least appetizing odor to the kitchen. In the pretty moulds in the woodshed stood the translucent cranberry hardening to its fixed consistency. In other moulds the obedient calf's-foot already announced its willingness and intention to "gell" as she directed. Huldah's decks were cleared again, her kitchen table fit to cut out "work" upon, — all the pans and plates were put away, which accumulate so mysteriously where cooking is going forward; on its nail hung the weary jigger, on its hook the spicy grater, on the roller a fresh towel. Every thing gave sign of victory, — the whole kitchen looking only a little nicer than usual. Huldah herself was dressed for the afternoon, and so was the baby; and nobody but as acute observers as you and I would have known that she had been in action all along the line, and had won the battle at every point, when two o'clock came, the earliest moment at which her husband ever returned.

Then, for the first time, it occurred to Huldah to look out doors and see how fast the snow was gathering. She knew it was still falling. But the storm was a quiet one, and she had had too much to do to be gaping out of the windows. She went to the shed door, and, to her amazement, saw that the north wood-pile was wholly drifted in! Nor could she, as she stood, see the fences of the roadway!

Huldah ran back into the house, opened the parlor door and drew up the curtain, to see that there

were indeed no fences on the front of the house to be seen. On the north-west, where the wind had full sweep, between her and the barn, the ground was bare. But all that snow, and who should say how much more, was piled up in front of her; so that unless Huldah had known every landmark, she would not have suspected that any road was ever there. She looked uneasily out of the north-west windows, but she could not see an inch to windward; dogged snow, snow, snow, as if it would never be done.

Huldah knew very well then that there was no husband for her in the next hour, nor most like in the next or the next. She knew very well, too, what she had to do,—and knowing it, she did it. She tied on her hood, and buttoned tight around her her rough sack, passed through the shed and crossed that bare strip to the barn, opened the door with some difficulty, because snow was already drifting into the doorway, and entered. She gave the cows and oxen their water, and the two night horses theirs; went up into the loft and pitched down hay enough for all; went down stairs to the pigs and cared for them; took one of the barn shovels and cleared a path where she had had to plunge into the snow at the doorway; took the shovel back, and then crossed home again to her baby. She thought she saw the Empsons' chimney smoking as she went home, and that seemed companionable. She took off her overshoes, sack, and hood, said aloud, "This will be a

good stay-at-home day," brought round her desk to the kitchen table, and began on a nice long letter to her brother Cephas in Sceattle.

That letter was finished, eight good quarto pages written, and a long-delayed letter to Emily Tabor, whom Huldah had not seen since she was married; and a long pull at her milk accounts had brought them up to date, — and still no John. Huldah had the table all set, you may be sure of that; but for herself, she had had no heart to go through the formalities of lunch or dinner. A cup of tea and something to eat with it as she wrote did better, she thought, for her; and she could eat when the men came. It is a way women have. Not till it became quite dark, and she set her kerosene lamp in the window that he might have a chance to see it when he turned the Locust Grove corner, did Huldah once feel herself lonely, or permit herself to wish that she did not live in a place where she could be cut off from all her race. "If John had gone into partnership with Jo Winter, and we had lived in Boston!" This was the thought that crossed her mind. Dear Huldah, from the end of one summer to the beginning of the next, Jo Winter does not go home to his dinner; and what you experience to-day, so far as absence from your husband goes, is what his wife experiences in Boston ten months, save Sundays, in every year.

I do not mean that Huldah winced or whined.

Not she. Only she did think "if." Then she sat in front of the stove and watched the coals, and for a little while continued to think "if." Not long. Very soon she was engaged in planning how she would arrange the table to-morrow, — whether mother Stevens should cut the chicken-pie, or whether she would have that in front of her own mother. Then she fell to planning what she would make for Cynthia's baby; and then to wondering whether Cephas was in earnest in that half-nonsense he wrote about Sibyl Dyer; and then the clock struck six!

No bells yet, no husband, no anybody. Lantern out and lighted. Rubber boots on, hood and sack. Shed-shovel in one hand, lantern in the other. Roadway still bare, but a drift as high as Huldah's shoulders at the barn door. Lantern on the ground; snow-shovel in both hands now. One, two, three! — one cubic foot out. One, two, three! — another cubic foot out. And so on, and so on, and so on, till the doorway is clear again. Lantern in one hand, snow-shovel in the other, we enter the barn, draw the water for cows and oxen; we shake down more hay, and see to the pigs again. This time we make beds of straw for the horses and the cattle. Nay, we linger a minute or two, for there is something companionable there. Then we shut them in in the dark, and cross the well-cleared roadway to the shed, and so home again. Certainly Mrs. Empson's kerosene lamp is in her window. That must be her light

which gives a little halo in that direction in the falling snow. That looks like society.

And this time Huldah undresses the baby, puts on her yellow flannel nightgown, — makes the whole as long as it may be, — and then, still making believe be jolly, lights another lamp, eats her own supper, clears it away, and cuts into the new “Harper” which John had brought up to her the day before.

But the “Harper” is dull reading to her, though generally so attractive. And when her Plymouth Hollow clock consents to strike eight at last, Huldah, who has stented herself to read till eight, gladly puts down the “Travels in Arizona,” which seem to her as much like the “Travels in Peru,” of the month before, as those had seemed like the “Travels in Chinchilla.” Rubber boots again, lantern again, sack and hood again. The men will be in no case for milking when they come. So Huldah brings together their pails, takes her shovel once more and her lantern, digs out the barn drift again, and goes over to milk little Carry and big Fanchon. For, though the milk of a hundred cows passes under those roofs and out again every day, Huldah is far too conservative to abandon the custom which she inherits from some Thorfinn or some Elfrida; and her husband is well pleased to humor her, in keeping in that barn always at least two of the choicest three-quarter blood cows that he can choose for the family supply. Only, in general, he or Reuben

milks them; as duties are divided there, this is not Huldah's share. But on this eve of St. Spiridon the gentle creatures were glad when she came in; and in two journeys back and forth Huldah had carried her well-filled pails into her dairy. This helped along the hour, and just after nine o'clock struck she could hear the cheers of the men at last. She ran out again with the ready lighted lantern to the shed door,—in an instant had on her boots and sack and hood,—had crossed to the barn and slid open the great barn door,—and stood there with her light,—another Hero for another Leander to buffet towards, through the snow. A sight to see were the two men, to be sure! And a story indeed they had to tell! On their different beats they had fought snow all day; had been breaking roads with the help of the farmers where they could; had had to give up more than half of the outlying farms, sending such messages as they might, that the outlying farmers might bring down to-morrow's milk to such stations as they could arrange; and, at last, by good luck had both met at the depot in the hollow, where each had gone to learn at what hour the milk-train might be expected in the morning. Little reason was there indeed to expect it at all. Nothing had passed the station-master since the morning express, called lightning by satire, had slowly pushed up with three or four engines five hours behind its time, and just now had come down a messenger from them that he

should telegraph to Boston that they were all blocked up at Tyler's Summit, — the snow drifting beneath their wheels faster than they could clear it. Above, the station-master said, nothing whatever had yet passed Winchendon. Five engines had gone out from Fitchburg eastward, but in the whole day they had not come as far as Leominster. It was very clear that no milk-train nor any other train would be on time the next morning.

Such was, in brief, John's report to Huldah, when they had got to that state of things in which a man can make a report; that is, after they had rubbed dry the horses, had locked up the barn, after the men had rubbed themselves dry and had put on dry clothing, and after each of them, sitting on the fire side of the table, had drunk his first cup of tea and eaten his first square cubic of dip-toast. After the dip-toast, they were going to begin on Huldah's fried potatoes and sausages.

Huldah heard their stories with all their infinite little details; knew every corner and turn by which they had husbanded strength and life; was grateful to the Corbetts and Varnums and Prescotts and the rest, who, with their oxen and their red right-hands had given such loyal help for the common good; and she heaved a deep sigh when the story ended with the verdict of the failure of the whole, — "No trains on time to-morrow."

"Bad for the Boston babies," said Reuben bluntly,

giving words to what the others were feeling. "Poor little things!" said Huldah, "Alice has been so pretty all day." And she gulped down just one more sigh, disgusted with herself as she remembered that "if" of the afternoon, "If John had only gone into partnership with Jo Winter."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THEY BROKE THE BLOCKADE.

THREE o'clock in the morning saw Huldah's fire burning in the stove, her water boiling in the kettle, her slices of ham broiling on the gridiron, and quarter past three saw the men come across from the barn, where they had been shaking down hay for the cows and horses, and yoking the oxen for the terrible onset of the day. It was bright starlight above, — thank Heaven for that. This strip of three hundred thousand square miles of snow cloud, which had been drifting steadily east over a continent, was, it seemed, only twenty hours wide, — say two hundred miles, more or less, — and at about midnight its last flecks had fallen, and all the heaven was washed black and clear. The men were well rested by those five hours of hard sleep. They were fitly dressed for their great encounter, and started cheerily upon it, as men who meant to do their duty, and to both of whom, indeed, the thought had come that life

and death might be trembling in their hands. They did not take out the pungs to-day, nor, of course, the horses. Such milk as they had collected on St. Victoria's day they had stored already at the station and at Stacy's, and the best they could do to-day would be to break open the road from the Four Corners to the station, that they might place as many cans as possible there before the down train came. From the house, then, they had only to drive down their oxen that they might work with the other teams from the Four Corners ; and it was only by begging him that Huldah persuaded Reuben to take one lunch can for them both. Then, as Reuben left the door, leaving John to kiss her good-by, and to tell her not to be alarmed if they did not come home at night, — she gave to John the full milk-can into which she had poured every drop of Carry's milk, and said, "It will be one more, and God knows what child may be crying for it now."

So they parted for eight-and-twenty hours ; and in place of Huldah's first state party of both families, she and Alice reigned solitary that day, and held their little court with never a suitor. And when her lunch-time came, Huldah looked half mournfully, half merrily, on her array of dainties prepared for the feast, and she would not touch one of them. She toasted some bread before the fire, made a cup of tea, boiled an egg, and would not so much as set the table. As has been before stated, this is the way with women.

And of the men : who shall tell the story of the pluck and endurance, of the unfailing good-will, of the resource in strange emergency, of the mutual help and common courage, with which the men all worked that day on that wellnigh hopeless task, of breaking open the highway from the Corners to the station? Wellnigh hopeless, indeed; for although at first, with fresh cattle and united effort, they made in the hours, which passed so quickly up to ten o'clock, near two miles' headway, and had brought yesterday's milk thus far, — more than half-way to their point of delivery, — at ten o'clock it was quite evident that this sharp north-west wind, which told so heavily on the oxen and even on the men, was filling in the very roadway they had opened, and so was cutting them off from their base, and, by its new drifts, was leaving the roadway for to-day's milk even worse than it was when they began. In one of those extemporized councils, then, — such as fought the battle of Bunker Hill, and threw the tea into Boston Harbor, it was determined, at ten o'clock, to divide the working parties. The larger body should work back to the Four Corners, and by proper relays keep that trunk line of road open, if they could; while six yoke, with their owners, still pressing forward to the station, should make a new base at Lovejoy's, where, when these oxen gave out, they could be put up at his barn. It was quite clear, indeed, to the experts, that that time was not far distant.

And so indeed it proved. By three in the afternoon, John and Reuben, and the other leaders of the advance party, namely, the whole of it, for such is the custom of New England, gathered around the fire at Lovejoy's, conscious that after twelve hours of such battle as Pavia never saw, nor Roncesvalles they were defeated at every point but one. Before them the mile of road, which they had made in the steady work of hours, was drifted in again as smooth as the surrounding pastures, only, if possible, a little more treacherous for the labor which they had thrown away upon it. The oxen, which had worked kindly and patiently, well handled by good-tempered men, yet all confused and half dead with exposure, could do no more. Well, indeed, if those that had been stalled fast, and had had to stand in that biting wind after gigantic effort, escaped with their lives from such exposure. All that the men had gained was, that they had advanced their first depot of milk, — two hundred and thirty-nine cans, — as far as Lovejoy's. What supply might have worked down to the Four Corners behind them, they did not know and hardly cared, their communications that way being wellnigh cut off again. What they thought of and planned for was simply how these cans at Lovejoy's could be put on any downward train. For, by this time, they knew that all trains would have lost their grades and their names, and that this milk would go into Boston by the first engine that went

there, though it rode on the velvet of a "palace car."

What train this might be they did not know. From the hill above Lovejoy's they could see poor old Dix, the station-master, with his wife and boys, doing his best to make an appearance of shovelling in front of his little station. But Dix's best was but little, for he had but one arm, having lost the other in a collision; and so, as a sort of pension, the company had placed him at this little flag-station, where was a roof over his head, a few tickets to sell, and generally very little else to do. It was clear enough that no working parties on the railroad had worked up to Dix, or had worked down, nor was it very likely that any would before night, unless the railroad people had better luck with their drifts than our friends had found. But as to this, who should say? Snow-drifts are "mighty onsartain." The line of that road is in general north-west, and to-day's wind might have cleaned out its gorges as persistently as it had filled up our cross-cuts. From Lovejoy's barn they could see that the track was now perfectly clear for the half-mile where it crossed the Prescott meadows.

I am sorry to have been so long in describing this the aspect of the field after the first engagement. But it was on this condition of affairs that, after full conference, the enterprises of the night were determined. Whatever was to be done was to be done

by men. And after thorough regale on Mrs. Lovejoy's green tea, and continual return to her constant relays of thin bacon gilded by unnumbered eggs; after cutting and coming again upon unnumbered mince-pies, which, I am sorry to say, did not in any point compare well with Huldah's, — each man thrust many doughnuts into his outside pockets, drew on the long boots again, and his buckskin gloves and mittens, and, unencumbered now by the care of animals, started on the work of the evening. The sun was just taking his last look at them from the western hills, where Reuben and John could see Huldah's chimney smoking. The plan was, by taking a double hand-sled of Lovejoy's, and by knocking together two or three more, jumper-fashion, to work their way across the meadow to the railroad causeway, and establish a milk depot there, where the line was not half a mile from Lovejoy's. By going and coming often, following certain tracks well known to Lovejoy on the windward side of walls and fences, these eight men felt quite sure that, by midnight, they could place all their milk at the spot where the old farm crossing strikes the railroad. Meanwhile Silas Lovejoy, a boy of fourteen, was to put on a pair of snow-shoes, go down to the station, state the case to old Dix, and get from him a red lantern and permission to stop the first train where it swept out from the Pitman cut upon the causeway. Old Dix had no more right to give this permission

than had the humblest street-sweeper in Ispahan, and this they all knew. But the fact that Silas had asked for it would show a willingness on their part to submit to authority, if authority there had been. This satisfied the New England love of law on the one hand. On the other hand, the train would be stopped, and this satisfied the New England determination to get the thing done any way. To give additional force to Silas, John provided him with a note to Dix, and it was generally agreed that, if Dix wasn't ugly, he would give the red lantern and the permission. Silas was then to work up the road and station himself as far beyond the curve as he could, and stop the first down train. He was to tell the conductor where the men were waiting with the milk, was to come down to them on the train, and his duty would be done. Lest Dix should be ugly, Silas was provided with Lovejoy's only lantern, but he was directed not to show this at the station until his interview was finished. Silas started cheerfully on his snow-shoes; John and Lovejoy, at the same time, starting with the first hand-sled of the cans. First of all into the sled John put Huldah's well-known can, a little shorter than the others, and with a different handle. "Whatever else went to Boston," he said, "that can was bound to go through."

They established the basis of their pyramid, and met the three new jumpers with their makers as they went back for more. This party enlarged the base

of the pyramid, and, as they worked, Silas passed them cheerfully with his red lantern. Old Dix had not been ugly, had given the lantern and all the permission he had to give, and had communicated some intelligence also. The intelligence was, that an accumulated force of seven engines, with a large working party, had left Groton Junction downward at three. Nothing had arrived upward at Groton Junction, and, from Boston, Dix learned that nothing more would leave there till early morning. No trains had arrived in Boston from any quarter for twenty-four hours. So long the blockade had lasted already.

On this intelligence it was clear that, with good luck, the down train might reach them at any moment. Still the men resolved to leave their milk, while they went back for more, relying on Silas and the "large working party" to put it on the cars, if the train chanced to pass before any of them returned. So back they fared to Lovejoy's for their next relay, and met John and Reuben working in successfully with their second. But no one need have hurried; for, as, trip after trip, they built their pyramid of cans higher and higher, no welcome whistle broke the stillness of the night, and by ten o'clock, when all these cans were in place by the rail, the train had not yet come.

John and Reuben then proposed to go up into the cut, and to relieve poor Silas, who had not been heard from since he swung along so cheerfully like

an "Excelsior" boy on his way up the Alps. But they had hardly started, when a horn from the meadow recalled them, and, retracing their way, they met a messenger who had come in to say that a fresh team from the Four Corners had been reported at Lovejoy's, with a dozen or more men, who had succeeded in bringing down nearly as far as Lovejoy's mowing-lot, near a hundred more cans; that it was quite possible in two or three hours more to bring this over also; and, although the first train was probably now close at hand, it was clearly worth while to place this relief in readiness for a second. So poor Silas was left for the moment to his loneliness, and Reuben and John returned again upon their steps. They passed the house, where they found Mrs. Lovejoy and Mrs. Stacy at work in the shed, finishing off two more jumpers, and claiming congratulation for their skill; and after a cup of tea again, — for no man touched spirit that day nor that night, — they reported at the new station by the Mowing-Lot.

And Silas Lovejoy, — who had turned the corner into the Pitman Cut, and so shut himself out from sight of the station light, or his father's windows, or the lanterns of the party at the Pyramid of Cans, — Silas Lovejoy held his watch there hour by hour, with such courage as the sense of the advance gives boy or man. He had not neglected to take the indispensable shovel as he came. In going over the

causeway he had slipped off the snow-shoes, and hung them on his back. Then there was heavy wading as he turned into the Pitman Cut, knee deep, middle deep, and he laid his snow-shoes on the snow, and set the red lantern on them, as he reconnoitred. Middle deep, neck deep, and he fell forward on his face into the yielding mass. "This will not do; I must not fall like that often," said Silas to himself, as he gained his balance and threw himself backward against the snow. Slowly he turned round, worked back to the lantern, worked out to the causeway, and fastened on the shoes again. With their safer help he easily skimmed up to Pitman's bridge, which he had determined on for his station. He knew that thence his lantern could be seen for a mile, and that yet there the train might safely be stopped, so near was the open causeway which he had just traversed. He had no fear of an up train behind him.

So Silas walked back and forth, and sang, and spouted "pieces" and mused on the future of his life, and spouted "pieces" again, and sang in the loneliness. How the time passed he did not know. No sound of clock, no baying of dog, no splash of waterfall, broke that utter stillness. The wind, thank God, had at last died away, and Silas paced his beat in a long oval he made for himself, under and beyond the bridge, with no sound but his own voice when he chose to raise it. He expected, as they all

did, that every moment the whistle of the train, as it swept into sight a mile or more away, would break the silence ; so he paced, and shouted, and sang.

"This is a man's duty," he said to himself ; "they would not let me go with the Fifth Regiment, not as a drummer-boy ; but this is duty such as no drummer-boy of them all is doing. Company, march !" and he "stepped forward smartly" with his left foot. "Really I am placed on guard here quite as much as if I were on picket in Virginia." "Who goes there ? Advance, friend, and give the countersign." Not that any one did go there, or could go there ; but the boy's fancy was ready, and so he amused himself during the first hours. Then he began to wonder whether they were hours, as they seemed, or whether this was all a wretched illusion, — whether the time passed slowly to him because he was nothing but a boy, and did not know how to occupy his mind. So he resolutely said the multiplication-table from the beginning to the end, and from the end to the beginning, — first to himself, and again aloud, to make it slower. Then he tried the ten commandments. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me ;" easy to say that beneath those stars ; and he said them again. "No, it is no illusion. I must have been here hours long !" Then he began on Milton's hymn : —

"It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt, in the rude manger lies."

"Winter wild indeed," said Silas aloud; and if he had only known it, at that moment the sun beneath his feet was crossing the meridian, midnight had passed already, and Christmas day was born!

"Only with speeches fair
She wooes the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow."

"Innocent, indeed," said poor Silas, still aloud; "much did he know of innocent snow;" and vainly did he try to recall the other stanzas as he paced back and forth, round and round, and began now to wonder where his father and the others were, and if they could have come to any misfortune. Surely, they could not have forgotten that he was here. Would that train never come?

If he were not afraid of its coming at once, he would have run back to the causeway to look for their lights,—and perhaps they had a fire. Why had he not brought an axe for a fire? "That rail-fence above would have served perfectly, nay, it is not five rods to a load of hickory we left the day before Thanksgiving. Surely one of them might come up to me with an axe. But maybe there is trouble below. They might have come with an axe, — with an axe, — with an axe — with an — axe —" "I am going to sleep," cried Silas, — aloud again this time, — as his head dropped heavily on the handle of the shovel he was resting on there in the lee of the stone-wall. "I am going to sleep, —

that will never do. Sentinel asleep at his post. Order out the relief. Blind his eyes. Kneel, sir. Make ready. Fire. That, sir, for sentinels asleep." And so Silas laughed grimly and began his march again. Then he took his shovel and began a great pit where he supposed the track might be beneath him. "Any thing to keep warm and to keep awake. But why did they not send up to him? Why was he here? Why was he all alone? He who had never been alone before. Was he alone? Was there companionship in the stars,—or in the good God who held the stars? Did the good God put me here? If He put me here, will He keep me here? Or did He put me here to die! To die in this cold? It is cold; it is very cold! Is there any good in my dying? The train will run down, and they will see a dead body lying under the bridge,—black on the snow, with a red lantern by it. Then they will stop. Shall I—I will—just go back to see if the lights are at the bend. I will leave the lantern here on the edge of this wall." And so Silas turned, half benumbed, worked his way nearly out of the gorge, and started as he heard, or thought he heard, a baby's scream. "A thousand babies are starving, and I am afraid to stay here to give them their life," he said. "There is a boy fit for a soldier! Order out the relief! Drum-head court-martial! Prisoner, hear your sentence! Deserter to be shot! Blindfold,—kneel, sir! Fire!

Good enough for deserters!" And so poor Silas worked back again to the lantern.

And now he saw and felt sure that Orion was bending downward, and he knew that the night must be broken; and, with some new hope, throwing down the shovel with which he had been working, he began his soldier tramp once more, — as far as soldier tramp was possible with those trailing snow-shoes, — tried again on "No war nor battle sound," — broke down on "Cynthia's seat" and the music of the spheres, — but at last, — working on "beams," "long beams," and "that with long beams," — he caught the stanzas he was feeling for, and broke out exulting with,

"At last surrounds their sight,
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shame-faced night arrayed;
The helmed cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks —"

"Globe of circular light, — am I dreaming, or have they come?"

Come they had! The globe of circular light swept full over the valley, and the scream of the engine was welcomed by the freezing boy as if it had been an angel's whisper to him. Not unprepared did it find him. The red lantern swung to and fro in a well-practised hand, and he was in waiting on his firmest spot as the train *slowed* and the engine passed him.

"Do not stop for me," he cried, as he threw his weight heavily on the tender side, and the workmen dragged him in. "Only run slow till you are out of the ledge; we have made a milk station at the cross-road."

"Good for you," said the wondering fireman, who in a moment understood the exigency. The heavy plough threw out the snow steadily still. In ten seconds they were clear of the ledge, and saw the fire-light shimmering on the great pyramids of milk-cans. Slower and slower ran the train, and by the blazing fire stopped, for once because its masters chose to stop. And the working party on the train cheered lustily as they tumbled out of the cars, as they apprehended the situation, and were cheered by the working party from the village.

Two or three cans of milk stood on the embers of the fire, that they might be ready for the men on the train with something that was at least warm. An empty passenger car was opened, and the pyramids of milk-cans were hurried into it, forty men now assisting.

"You will find Jo Winter at the Boston station," said John Stevens to the "gentlemanly conductor" of the express, whose lightning train had thus become a milk convoy. "Tell Winter to distribute this among all the carts, that everybody may have some. Good luck to you. Good-by!" And the engines snorted again, and John Stevens turned back, not so much as thinking that he had made his Christmas present to a starving town.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS MORNING.

THE children were around Robert Walter's knees, and each of the two spelled out a verse of the second chapter of Luke, on Christmas morning. And Robert and Mary kneeled with them, and they said together, "Our Father who art in heaven." Mary's voice broke a little when they came to "daily bread," but with the two, and her husband, she continued to the end, and could say "Thine is the power," and believe it too.

"Mamma," whispered little Fanny as she kissed her mother after the prayer, "when I said my prayer up stairs last night, I said 'our daily milk,' and so did Robert." This was more than poor Mary could bear. She kissed the child, and she hurried away.

For last night at six o'clock it was clear that the milk was sour, and little Jamie had detected it first of all. Then, with every one of the old wiles, they had gone back over the old slops, but the child, with that old weird strength, had pushed them all away. Christmas morning broke, and poor Robert, as soon as light would serve, had gone to the neighbors all — their nearest intimates they had tried the night before, — and from all had brought back the same reply; one friend had sent a wretched sample, but

the boy detected the taint and pushed it, untasted, away. Dr. Morton had taken the alarm the day before. He was at the house earlier than usual with some condensed milk, which his wife's stores had furnished; but that would not answer. Poor Jamie pushed this by. There was some smoke or something, — who should say what? — it would not do. The doctor could see in an instant how his patient had fallen back in the night. That weird, anxious, entreating look, as his head lay back on the little pillow, had all come back again. Robert and Robert's friends, Gaisford and Warren, had gone down to the Old Colony, to the Worcester, and to the Hartford stations. Perhaps their trains were doing better. The door-bell rang yet again. "M s. Appleton's love to Mrs. Walter, and perhaps her child will try some fresh beef-tea." As if poor Jamie did not hate beef-tea; still Morton resolutely forced three spoonfuls down. Half an hour more and Mrs. Dudley's compliments. "Mrs. Dudley heard that Mrs. Walter was out of milk, and took the liberty to send round some very particularly nice Scotch groats, which her brother had just brought from Edinburgh." "Do your best with it, Fanny," said poor Mary; but she knew that if Jamie took those Scotch groats, it was only because they were a Christmas present. Half an hour more! Three more spoonfuls of beef-tea after a fight. Door-bell again. Carriage at the door. "Would Mrs.

Walter come down and see Mrs. Fitch? It was really very particular." Mary was half dazed, and went down, she did not know why.

"Dear Mrs. Walter, you do not remember me," said this eager girl, crossing the room and taking her by both hands.

"Why no,—yes,—do I?" said Mary, crying and laughing together.

"Yes, you will remember, it was at church, at the baptism. My Jennie and your Jamie were christened the same day. And now I hear,—we all know how low he is,—and perhaps he will share my Jennie's breakfast. Dear Mrs. Walter, do let me try."

Then Mary saw that the little woman's cloak and hat were already thrown off,—which had not seemed strange to her before,—and the two passed quietly up stairs together; and Julia Fitch bent gently over him, and cooed to him, and smiled to him, but could not make the poor child smile. And they lifted him so gently on the pillow,—but only to hear him scream. And she brought his head gently to her heart, and drew back the little curtain that was left, and offered to him her life; but he was frightened, and did not know her, and had forgotten what it was she gave him, and screamed again; and so they had to lay him back gently upon the pillow. And then, as Julia was saying she would stay, and how they could try again,—and could do this and that,—

then the door-bell rang again, and Mrs. Coleman had herself come round with a little white pitcher, and herself run up stairs with it, and herself knocked at the door !

The blockade was broken, and
The milk had come !

Mary never knew that it was from Huldah Stevens's milk-can that her boy drank in the first drops of his new life. Nor did Huldah know it. Nor did John know it, nor the paladins who fought that day at his side. Nor did Silas Lovejoy know it.

But the good God and all good angels knew it. Why ask for more ?

And you and I, dear reader, if we ever forget that always our daily bread comes to us, because a thousand brave men and a thousand brave women are at work in the world, praying to God and trying to serve him, we will not forget it as we meet at breakfast on this blessed Christmas day !





“THE OILED FEATHER.”





“THE OILED FEATHER.”

CHAPTER I.

IN the village of — lived two neighbors, named Joseph Irons and Samuel Parsons. Joseph Irons went by the name of “Rusty Joe,” and Samuel Parsons by that of “Polished Sam.” The names were characteristic of the men, — Joseph Irons being a short, tart kind of man in his dealings with his fellow-creatures; and Samuel Parsons being, on the other hand, genial and civil. Joseph Irons wouldn’t put his hand to his hat for any man, not he! he wouldn’t waste his time with palavering people with fine words, no, not he! if folk didn’t like his goods, they may leave them; and if they didn’t like his answers, they needn’t ask him any questions; in a word, “Rusty Joe,” though very honest, and very decent living, was disliked by almost everybody, and, in truth, no one could be surprised.

On the other hand, Samuel Parsons was a general favorite; he had a salute for every one that came in the way; he didn’t think himself a bit the worse man because he put his hand to his hat to the

parson and the squire, as well as bobbed his head to the old apple-woman at the corner of the street. As to civil words, Sam's theory was, that they were quite as little trouble to speak as gruff ones; and they certainly slipped more pleasant-like out of one's mouth; and so it came to pass, that everybody liked Sam Parsons, and we may wind up this paragraph, just as we did the last, by saying, and, in truth, no one could be surprised.

"Polished Sam" and "Rusty Joe" might have lived on to the end of the world, for aught that we have to do with them, were it not that they afford us some very useful lessons, which will teach us, if we learn them, how to avoid a great deal of unpleasantness, in this rusty crusty world of ours. The world is full of Rusty Joes, and Rusty Joes' wives, too, and folk make no small part of their own misery by bumping and thumping against one another, when the road is wide enough for all; and by being grumpy and growly when a wee bit of civility would answer the purpose quite as well. Folk should remember the great mechanical law, that "action and reaction are equal and contrary;" that is, put into plain words: if you throw a ball against a wall, the wall will hit the ball as hard as the ball hits the wall, only in an opposite direction. Or if you like to put it into the language of daily life, it will read thus: "If you thump me, I'll thump you; and moreover I'll thump you as hard as you thump me." Of

course, we consider this an un-Christian way of going through life; all we say is, that it is a very common one.

Well, we will see how "Rusty Joe" and "Polished Sam" got through one day of their existence; one day will be quite enough for such a little book as this.

"Come, bring the oil flask, there's a pet," said Samuel Parsons to his wife, as he finished screwing on a new lock on his front door. Sam, of course, needn't have said, "there's a pet," unless he liked; but he used to think it was a great shame that women were called all sorts of pretty names before they were married, but none afterwards. "I say," says Sam, "many of the poor creatures are cheated with them there pretty names: poor folk! they think they'll always get them; but they become mighty scarce after they finger the ring." We don't mean to tell all the names Sam called his wife, before they were married, but now he called her pet; and as soon as she heard the loving word, she threw down her duster on the chair, and sped off to the kitchen for the flask. The flask had a feather in it, as such flasks generally have; and Sam, taking the said feather between his forefinger and thumb, oiled the key of the street door right well, and then locked it and unlocked it a dozen times. At first it went stiff and required some strength of wrist to turn it; but as it was worked to and fro, and the oil began to

make its way into the wards, it worked more and more easily, until at last Tommy, Sam's little son, who was standing by, was able to turn it almost with a touch, and then Sam pronounced that it would do.

This operation finished, Sam thought he'd just give his knife a touch of the end of the feather; less than a drop out of the flask would do; just a mere touch, that was all it wanted; and presently, to young Tommy's great delight, his father made the blade go up and down, click, click. Tommy evidently approved of the result, for he began to click, click, with his tongue and the roof of his mouth in imitation; and how long he might have delayed his father we can't tell, if it were not that Mrs. Parsons caught him up in her arms, and made off with him; she calling Tommy a "saucy rogue," and kissing him all the way; and he, on his part, click, clicking, as though his mouth were a cutler's shop, and you were opening and shutting every knife in it.

Some folk might think that Sam Parsons had done enough in the oiling line for one day; but there was one thing more to do, and then he would be quite ready to take his potatoes to market. One or two of the wheels of his wagon had been a trifle creaky, and so he took the grease-pot, and gave them a touch of its contents. You could have rolled all he put upon them into the size of a couple of marbles, but 'twas quite enough; the wheels gave over creak-

ing, and, if the old proverb be true, that "Silence gives consent," no doubt they highly approved of what Sam had done.

"Now, then, I'm off to market," said Sam. "Good-by, Jenny, pet." Oh that little word, "pet"! didn't the cunning fellow oil his wife's temper, and even almost her very joints, for her day's work, when he called her that little name. "Good-by, Tommy, my darling." Oh you cunning man! there you are with your oiled feather again; for when Tommy was naughty, and his mother reminded him that she must tell his father, when he came home, and "father would be sore grieved if his darling was naughty," wasn't Tommy good? for child though he was, he was able to reason thus much in his mind: Tommy is father's darling, and he won't vex him; darlings ought not to vex those who love them. Never mind, good reader, if there's a flaw in the logic; nursery logic is sometimes very funny reasoning, but it answered the purpose; naughty Tommy became good, and clicked, clicked about the house as merry as a sunbeam, instead of sprawling and bawling on the ground; and all because his father happened to call him a darling before he went out.

"I say, Polly," said Sam Parsons to his one servant-maid, as he left the house, "don't forget to clean up those irons, if you can manage it, there's a good lass: you'll find the oil-flask hanging up behind the kitchen door;" and so, with a cheerful smile on

his countenance, Sam Parsons took his departure for market. Ah, cunning Sam! before he went, he oiled his wife and child, and now he oiled the servant-maid; and when he turned his back upon his own door, he left smiling faces and glad hearts behind him, and I warrant he found them all smiling to receive him when he came home.

CHAPTER II.

"RUSTY JOE" shall have a chapter to himself; we won't mix him up with "Polished Sam" on any account. Acid and sweet make a very good drink when mixed together, and we dare say Joe and Sam must meet before our story's done, and if they do, we hope it will be to do the reader good; but they must keep asunder for a while.

"Rusty Joe" had an idea that it was rather letting one's self down to be civil; he could not see the distinction between being sneaking and cringing and time-serving in one's conduct, and being civil and pleasant; he prided himself on being blunt and honest and upright, ay, and downright, too; but he forgot that he was often rude and surly and morose.

Now on this very morning, "Rusty Joe" was going to market also! and it so happened that he

ought to have done what his neighbor, "Polished Sam," had done; but he was above attending to such little things, and provided a thing could be done at all, he did not mind if it were by main force; a pull and a bang would do as well as any thing else; but pulls and bangs knock one's temper about a great deal; this, however, "Rusty Joe" did not take into account.

Before it was time for Joseph Irons to leave his house, on this eventful day, he had as much misery as would fall to his neighbor, "Polished Sam," in a week. In the first place, he had neglected to grease his boots, after last market day, which had been very wet; and now, when he went to put on these same boots, for the day promised to be wet again, they were so hard and stiff, that he pulled and kicked, and knocked and stamped, in vain. A very little of this work will try a man's temper, and at last Joe was about to give up in despair, when, with a final pull and kick, he knocked one foot into a boot; and, seeing that it would be almost as hard to pull out the leg, once it was in, as to get in the other, he knocked and kicked away until the second got in also. Bad temper is always bad for a man's digestion, and sometimes it will make him quarrel even with his meat, hence we need not be surprised to hear that nothing was right that morning at breakfast. The eggs were too hard, and the bread was too soft, the bacon dish was too hot, and the tea-pot

was too cold ; and who can wonder, when Joe's two boots, as hard and stiff as if they had been frozen, were pinching his toes and heels, just as if they had ten wicked fingers with ten long claws on them. Ah ! Joseph Irons, you should have greased your boots, or put the least drop in the world of linseed oil upon them, and you would have agreed much better with your breakfast ; ay, and your breakfast would have agreed much better with you.

When Joseph Irons had bolted his breakfast, he got up and went to the street door to go out ; but no loving word did he speak to his wife Betty, who, if the truth were known, was by no means sorry to get rid of him and his tempers for a while. True ! Joseph never abused his wife ; but he was exacting and unsympathizing, and gave very few kind words ; and the consequence was, she just creaked along through life's duties ; she did not run smoothly and swiftly like the wheels of Sam Parsons's wagon ; nor had she any spring in her, like his well-oiled pen-knife ; nor did she move about comfortably through the ins and outs of life, as Sam Parsons's oiled key did through the wards of his lock ; she was a poor, downhearted creature, who never basked in the sunshine of a little love ; who never heard the music of an affectionate word ; who had, indeed, all the machinery of a woman's heart, with all its great capacity for doing wondrous things ; but there was just something wanted to set it all agoing, — it was a little

love. "Mind you have my shirt finished to-night," said Joe Irons, as he laid his hand on the street door, "for I may have to go to Pitbank to-morrow, and I don't want to go to the Squire's in this old concern;" and with this direction to his wife, Mr. Irons took himself off.

But if Joe Irons met with trouble from want of a little oil, even before he got to his street door, he met with more when he got to the door itself. The door was stiff in its hinges, and stiff in the lock, ay, as stiff as if it had had the rheumatics for twenty years. After a little difficulty, Joe Irons opened his door, but he could not shut it with as little trouble again. That door seemed to have a will of its own; and, unfortunately, it was not just now the same as Joe Irons's will: perhaps it might have thought that the house, which smelt a little fusty, might be the better for some ventilation; or, may be, it was simply obstinate, and wouldn't shut; but so it was, that Joe gave it five or six pulls without success. Now it was no new thing to Joseph Irons to pull that door; he despised such a small thing as a drop of oil; the door had hitherto yielded to main force, and his strength was in no wise abated, so, "here goes," said he, and he gave it a bang with all his might. There was no resisting such an appeal as this; so the door was shut with a bang loud enough to rouse the whole neighborhood; but alas! my poor friend, Joe, you don't know what harm you did; you actually shook

the house, and broke a glass shade upon the chimney-piece in the parlor. That glass shade was part of the only ornament in the room; it covered two or three foreign birds, which Mrs. Irons's brother, who had been a mate in a vessel, brought her home from foreign parts; and Mrs. Irons was very much vexed. Had her husband spoken a kind word or two to her before leaving, she would, in all probability, have put up with the loss for his sake; but he had done nothing of the kind; and the consequence was, when the glass came tumbling down, she felt very irritated and sore.

This, then, was the way that "Rusty Joe" started forth to market; he met with trouble before he went to his street door, and when he arrived at it; and, as we shall presently see, with plenty more before he returned to it again.

The market town of — was full ten miles from the village where "Rusty Joe" and "Polished Sam" lived; and there was a good deal of up-hill road on the way thither. The road was, moreover, heavy, for recent rain had fallen, and there seemed to be a prospect of more. Already had "Rusty Joe" lost some time over his boots and over the door; and it behooved him now to make as much speed as he could, in order to reach the market in time; of this he was well aware, and so he smacked his whip frequently, as he cleared the bounds of the village, and the long road lay before him. But Joe's

troubles still lay thick before him; he soon found himself a poor, limping creature, and every step he took seemed to have a corresponding pinch belonging to it. Presently he began to feel conscious that he would be late for market, unless he could get on a little faster; and accordingly, at any hazard to his unfortunate ten toes, he smacked his whip, and jee-hopped to his horses; but he soon found that they could not make much more way than himself. What was the matter? Was the load heavier than usual? Were the roads heavier? No: but "Rusty Joe" had not greased the wheels of his wagon for a long time; and now the vehicle went on, creak, creak, as though it would come to pieces every moment. Main force was Joe's resource on all occasions, so he whipped the horses, and they pulled with all their might; but at the Blackford hill, they found the wagon so hard to move, that they had to stop over and over again.

Instead of making allowances for the poor beasts, which were really doing their best, our friend, "Rusty Joe," determined to make them pull the wagon up the hill; accordingly he pulled a piece of whipcord out of his pocket, and his knife also, and while the horses stood puffing and panting and blowing with their exertions, he prepared to fit on a new lash. "I'll tickle you, my lads," said "Rusty Joe," and so saying, he applied his thumb-nail to the knife, to open the blade to cut the cord. The knife

was stiff; in fact, the hinge of the blade was rusted but the angry man would not lose any time over it: he made a tremendous effort; force, with him, would do every thing; and with a tremendous effort, he half opened the blade; but, in doing so, he broke his nail down to the quick, and the pain soon made itself plainly felt. Still the angry man was not to be put off; he cut the whipcord; he put on a new lash; and with a crack, crack, crack, he tried to start the horses with the creaking wagon up hill; but force will not do every thing in the world; the horses made such a plunge, under the influence of the smarting lash, that the harness broke, and there stood "Rusty Joe," in a sad plight, neither able to go on or to return. Joe! you should have greased your boots, and you would not have been late. Joe! you should have oiled your door, and you would not have lost your temper. Joe! you should have oiled your wagon-wheels, and then your horses could have pulled it up the hill. Joe! you should have oiled your penknife, and you would not have torn your nail. Joe! you should have oiled your harness, and the leather would not have become rotten, and broken, as it has now done, in your time of need; and we must leave you there, Joe, upon the road-side, to meditate upon these things for a while: sorry, no doubt, that you are in such trouble, but hoping that you will come out of it, perhaps a sadder, but still a wiser man.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN "Polished Sam" left home on this eventful morning, he had a smile on his lip, and a bright, gladsome look in his eye; and if he had the world before him, he had a bright and happy home behind him.

Believe me, good reader, that a bright and happy home is a wonderful back-up to a man when he goes forth into a hard and cold world, to make his way through the day's business as best he can. On the present occasion, "Polished Sam" was backed up by Jenny, his wife; and by little Tommy, his son; and by Polly, the servant-maid; they had all smiled him forth on his journey, and they would all smile him home again; ay and Sam would be in a hurry to get home to all these smiling folk; and when he got a rub in the market from any of the Rusty Joes who might be there, he went famously through it all, for he knew he'd soon get home to peace and quiet and love again. You must not think, kind reader, that Sam Parsons didn't get knocks and rubs of all kinds in the world: he came in for his share; but he slipped through them better than other folk, for he was so civil and polished in his way, that he disarmed the ill feeling of many.

The first person Sam Parsons came in sight of was old Biddy Magrath, the woman who sold apples

at the corner of the street. "Good morning, Biddy," said Sam.

"Good morning, and good luck," answered Biddy; "is it to market ye's going to-day, Mr. Parsons?"

"Yes, Biddy; can I do any thing for you?" said Sam.

"Can ye do any thing for me?" answered Biddy, "to be sure ye can: bring me two ounces of the best tay, and half a pound of brown sugar, and here's the money;" and so saying, Biddy pulled forth a ball of rag from her pocket, which, when unrolled, much after the fashion of an Egyptian mummy, developed a shilling.

"I'll get you a good cup," said Sam, as he took the shilling: "you'll never have a better cup than I wish you;" and he smacked his whip, and passed on.

Bridget Magrath had not much of the sunshine of the world falling upon her poor wrinkled face; and it was well for her she had naturally a cheerful temper. She led but a sorry life of it with the boys of the village; and Sam Parsons's kind word was one of the few gleams which fell to her lot. We can understand, therefore, the multitude of blessings wherewith Bridget overwhelmed Sam; how she called him all sorts of fine names, and at length how she subsided behind her rickety table, to sell apples, if she could, all day long, but, at any rate, to wait for the evening, and Sam's arrival with the "tay."

No doubt it was but a small kindness that Sam showed, but he made a fellow-creature happy by it; in fact, he oiled old Biddy, as well as his wife and child and maid; and Bridget was not half so cross all that day, because she had the remembrance of a kindly word and genial smile to help her through.

As Sam Parsons went to market, he had to surmount the same hill on which his neighbor, "Rusty Joe," afterwards fared so badly; the road was just as steep, his horses' load was just as heavy, and nothing but a little oil carried Sam successfully up that hill. The wheels of Sam's wagon turned easily enough, for he had not neglected to grease them; but all the grease in the world could not make the wheels turn by themselves; it is true, Sam had a little oil with him; he generally had a little bottle amongst a few odds and ends in a box attached to his wagon, but one cannot oil horses' hoofs or joints; so, on the present occasion, unless Sam Parsons were possessed of something more, he had little chance of surmounting Blackford hill; indeed, less chance than his neighbor, "Rusty Joe," had after him, for his horses were not so strong. But Sam Parsons had another oil-bottle, which was able effectually to do the work; Sam had a kind heart and word for man and beast, and this kind word carried him up the Blackford hill; yes, he oiled his horses with it, and up they went. When first the team desired to stop, Sam let the poor beasts rest to recover breath; he

put a couple of stones behind the wagon-wheels, and then went round and patted each of the horses on the neck ; yes, he even rubbed their noses with his hand, and the horses seemed to understand that their master was caressing and encouraging them. If human beings rub noses in some part of the world, and understand that form of salutation, why should not man and beast understand each other, when the former rubs the latter's nose? Well! Sam Parsons rubbed his horses' noses, and patted their necks, and thus the cunning fellow oiled them well; and when in a moment or two afterwards he smacked his whip, just as a matter of course, and cried jee-hup, and made other little persuasive noises, which we cannot write down, for horse-language is a thing by itself, the team gave a pull, a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, and up the Blackford hill they went; and not one of them required the lash.

Now if Sam Parsons had told any one that he oiled his horses at the Blackford hill, they would in all probability have thought him mad; nevertheless, dear reader, he did really oil them as much as he did the wheels of the wagon they drew; he oiled their tempers, and, moreover, the oil put on them cost him nothing, and so the work was done. It is astonishing over what a surface a little oil will spread itself; astonishing how many obstacles it will remove; astonishing how many evils it will avert; what a pity it is that folk don't know more of its value! Kind

words! kind deeds! kind looks! oh! they will often carry us up a hill of difficulty, where the lash and oath and angry temper would prove of no avail.

The whole space of this little book would be absorbed if we had to recount all Sam Parsons's ins and outs at the market town even this one day. Were we to undertake such a task, we should have to tell how "Polished Sam" was served with a specially nice bit at the market inn; for the waiter always had a kind word, and an "if you please," and a "thank you" from him, when he had little more than gruff orders from most of the other farmers; we should also have to relate how a dealer, who thought that Sam was very soft, because he was very civil, tried to "do" him in a bargain, but how our hero stood firm, for he was no fool, and did not want to be done; and got his fair price at last. We should also have to tell how Sam brought home a paper of sugar candy from the grocer at whose shop he bought old Bridget's tea; and how about a dozen folk, who were snarling and quarrelling with each other, all had a smile for him. Furthermore, we should have to tell how our hero, by a few kind words, threw oil on the troubled waters, when two ill-conditioned fellows were almost coming to blows; and how he put matters straight between them in two minutes, after they had been wrangling nearly two hours; but why say, good reader, how much we

could tell you, when we don't mean to do any thing of the kind, and when it is high time for "Polished Sam" to be thinking of going home.



CHAPTER IV.

"RUSTY JOE" made a bad day's business of it. he never got to market at all. A little examination of the harness showed that it was completely done for; and he had to untackle his horses, leave his wagon there, and make the best of his way home. With one delay and another, it was coming on evening before this unfortunate man could fetch his wagon home again. "Rusty Joe" tried one person and another in the village who had harness; he sent to some of his brother farmers round about, but no one seemed inclined to go out of his way to oblige him; they had all at some time met with rudeness at his hands, and now they did not want to have any thing to do with him. Of course we are not commending their conduct; they ought to have returned good for evil, but, as is too often the case, they did not.

So much time was consumed in sending about to the neighbors, and in endeavoring to cobble up a harness of rope, that it was coming on evening, before "Rusty Joe" was able to return with his

horses to the wagon; and when he reached it, he was destined to meet with a fresh trouble,—the wagon was not as he had left it; the covering had evidently been moved; and poor Joe found out, only too soon, the reason why; for no small part of the contents of the wagon had been stolen; a gipsy party had passed that way, and they had made free with the unguarded property.

When "Rusty Joe" found that he had not only lost his market, but also some of the produce that he was carrying there, and when he reflected that it was upon the sale of that very produce he was in part depending to pay his rent, he became as savage as an old bear: he cursed and swore; but that, like all cursing and swearing, did him no good; and at last he sat down by the road-side. "Rusty Joe" had not been there many minutes, when he heard the sound of wheels; and soon "Polished Sam" appeared in sight, with his team; Sam was whistling like a blackbird, and the bells on his horses were tinkling cheerily; and he and the team seemed more like a merry family party than any thing else. A moment's glance was sufficient to show Sam Parsons that there was something wrong, and he hastened as fast as he safely could, down the hill, to meet his unhappy neighbor; to sympathize and help. But "Rusty Joe" wanted no help; no, not he: some folk were lucky, and some were unlucky; and he didn't want other folk to be prying into and meddling with

his affairs; and the ungracious man carried on in this style for full half an hour. As Joe would not be helped, of course Sam could not interfere; but he found various excuses for dawdling about, until his neighbor had managed to get the horses harnessed and put to; then, with a muttered curse or two, the man and his horses started for home. But oh! what a chorus of creaks came from his dry and squeaking wheels; and so stiffly and heavily did the wagon roll, that there is no knowing when it would have reached home, or whether it would not have broken down again by the way, had not Sam Parsons ventured to offer a little help once more. Sam, in the kindness of his heart, had kept close to his neighbor; and now he made bold to suggest that the wagon could never be got home without a little grease. "You heard it creaking, neighbor," said he to "Rusty Joe," "and I believe it was just for want of a little grease, it stuck so fast upon the hill;" so saying, Sam Parsons produced a little from his wagon, and managed to get it well on to the creaking wheels. Marvellous was the change; the creaks suddenly subsided into silence, and the horses easily drew their load; even the patched-up harness was quite equal to its work, so slight was the strain put upon it.

With all his grumpy tempers, "Rusty Joe" was not sorry to receive such substantial help; so he allowed Sam Parsons to walk by his side, Sam's

wagon following close behind. Sam was not long before he spied Joe halting very much on one foot. Sam sympathized with him for having corras, and had just begun a dissertation on the virtue of a certain corn-plaster, when his companion told him that it was stiff shoe-leather that was doing the mischief. "The boots are as stiff as if they were frozen," said "Rusty Joe," "ever since the last market-day, when they got such a wetting." "Whee-o-o," whistled Sam, "I'll soften them in two minutes;" and slipping behind to his wagon, he brought forth his oil-bottle, and gave the boots a good anointing with its contents. Of course, the cure could not be perfect in so short a time, still "Rusty Joe" could not but see that a little oil was able to do wonders: the boots seemed to have become quite good-natured; and it was a question whether a little more oil would not make them even frolicsome. "I have great faith in oil," said Sam Parsons, "I oil almost every thing; this very morning I oiled the lock of my street door and my penknife, and I greased my wagon-wheels, and I oiled my wife and child, and I gave the servant-maid a touch, too; and I tell you what it is, neighbor Joe, I slip along famously, where I find many another sticks fast." "Rusty Joe's" torn nail seemed to give him a fresh twinge when the penknife was spoken about, and as to the wife, his conscience reminded him how bearishly he had behaved to her at breakfast. "What do you mean by oiling your

wife, man?" said "Rusty Joe," rather tartly: "you haven't been sneaky, have you, and knocking under to a woman?" and "Rusty Joe" edged away from "Polished Sam's" side, as though he were near some slimy serpent. "No, indeed," answered Sam, "I've not been knocking any way, neither over nor under, but I just gave her and the bantling a loving word before I started from home; and I said a kind word to the lass to cheer her up through her work for the day; and for the matter of that, I gave the old apple-woman a touch of my oiled feather too: few people say a kind word to her, and so I did, and, I dare say, it helped her through the day, too! I wouldn't cringe to any one living," continued "Polished Sam," "not to the queen herself: but to cringe is one thing, to be civil, respectful, and loving, according as the case requires, is another; I never knew ill come of it, and I've often known good. Yes, neighbor, I've known the good of it in my own house, over and over again: there's my Jenny, you don't know the work there's in that little creature; bless you! she'd work herself to the finger-bone if you give her a kind word; I knowed her to sit up seven nights with me, without taking off a stitch of her clothes, that time I broke my leg; and when I said to her one morning, as the day was breaking, and I looked at her red eyelids, 'Jenny, my darling, I can never pay you for all this,' — didn't she laugh and say, 'Why, Sam, how can you tell such a story? you've paid me now.'"

"Paid you, woman, why what do you mean?"

"Didn't you say my darling?"

"To be sure I did," said Sam.

"Well! wasn't that payment to a woman's heart?"

"And she looked so earnest like at me, that I felt the tears come into my eyes. Oh, neighbor, I couldn't say it as she said it; for these women have a way of speaking that don't belong to us men; sometimes I think there's something that makes music in their throats; but ever since that day, I've been ten times as loving as I was before, and I try to say a kind word, not only to Jenny, but to every one I meet. I believe, neighbor," continued Sam, "that women's of that nature, that they'll do any thing for love: no use our driving them, our scolding, and ordering, and banging about: that only makes slaves of them; but give them a little love, and they'll do wonders." As Sam Parsons found that his neighbor was listening, he was encouraged to go on, even though he received no answer. "And I do the same," said Sam, "by every wench that comes to service to me; servants are made of the same stuff as their mistresses; they all have hearts, and the same kind of oil will reach them all."

Thus discoursing, Sam Parsons reached his own farm-yard; there was Jenny his wife ready to meet him with a kiss, and there was Tommy, who received his father with a click, click, leaving it a matter of

speculation as to whether he had not been clicking ever since the morning until now; and then there was Polly, the servant-maid, standing close to the irons, which shone as though they were fresh from the shop; she hoped they'd catch her master's eye, and she knew she'd get a kind word; and when Sam went into the sitting-room, there he saw a great heap of his stockings that Jenny had been darning; and when Sam sat down to tea, there was a pie that Jenny had made; and if Sam had been a little boy instead of a grown-up man, he would certainly have patted his chest and smacked his lips, and so expressed his opinion, that that was "something like a pie." One would think that Sam Parsons had oiled the pie, so smoothly did each piece slip down his throat, for he was at peace with Jenny his wife, Tommy his son, and Polly the servant-maid. Good humor promotes digestion, and our readers will be glad to hear that Sam slept well upon that good supper, and had pleasant dreams, and woke up refreshed, to be happy and make others happy all day long.

CHAPTER V.

OUR friend, "Rusty Joe," shall have the last chapter all to himself. And first of all it must be told that "Polished Sam's" observations were not alto-

gether thrown away upon him. Although he wouldn't let on to other folk that he was a miserable man, still he really was so, and he owned it to himself; his conscience kept saying to him, "You are all of a piece, 'force, force,' 'must, must,' 'shall, shall, for everybody and every thing." The contrast between his happy neighbor and his miserable self could not but strike the poor man's mind, and he made a desperate resolution to reform. "I'll do it, I'll do it," said Joe, in a loud voice, never thinking that there was any one to hear him; but it so happened that the parson was close behind; and struck with his parishioner's energy, he said, "Do what?" "Reform," answered Joe, like a man in a dream, who feels himself obliged to speak whether he like or not.

"We can't reform in any thing without the grace of God to help us," said the minister, "and we must ask for that, Mr. Irons."

This speech seemed to rouse Joe up, and he felt very queer when he found himself actually embarked in a conversation with the parson: all this was so very new, that Joe didn't quite like it, and indeed he would have backed out of the conversation as quickly as possible, but that the parson, who always stuck like a piece of wax to his work, was too glad to get a word with his rusty parishioner, easily to let him go. Gently and gradually he drew from the poor, crest-fallen fellow the whole of what was in

his mind, and when Joe came to his own house, he even asked the parson in.

The minister felt like a fish out of water in Joe Irons's house; but it was very well that he went in; for Joe's wife, irritated by the destruction of her solitary ornament, and by her husband's rude way of speaking, had not done his shirt, nor paid any very special attention to what he was to eat. The minister's presence prevented any harsh words; and his wise and loving counsel led Joe and his wife to forgive and forget the past, and commence afresh that night, by asking for strength from heaven to speak, do, and be like Jesus Christ. He read for them that night the 133d Psalm, and showed them "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: how it is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

That very night Joe began. When the minister was going, he actually handed him his hat, and made a kind of attempt at a bow at the door. And Joe's wife began; for she bathed his poor broken nail, and sat up nearly all night to get ready his shirt; and when the morning came, "Rusty Joe" oiled almost every thing he had, and in a twelve months' time he was liked as well as any one in the parish. Yes!

there were no more banging of doors in Joe Irons's house; there were no more rough words between him and his wife; there was enough of kindness to make home comfortable, and a little to spare to make neighbors agreeable, and Joe Irons became a happy man. Joe's choicest friend was henceforth "Polished Sam;" and Joe kept as close to his skirts as though he expected to rub some of the polish from him upon himself. Joe never forgot the parson's advice to seek strength for improvement on his knees; and, by way of a reminder, that he should not forget his new principles, he hung something over his bedroom mantel-piece, so that it should be the first thing that met his eyes when he awoke; and what do you think it was, good reader?

AN OILED FEATHER.







**THE MAN WHO KEPT HIMSELF
IN REPAIR.**





THE
MAN WHO KEPT HIMSELF IN REPAIR.

CHAPTER I.

SHOWS HOW MR. JOSEPH FLICKER KEPT HIMSELF
IN REPAIR.

MR. JOSEPH FLICKER might have been called a "cobbler," by that class of persons who always take delight in giving their fellow-creatures credit for as little as possible; but those who were of a generous turn of mind would probably have called him a "shoemaker;" and perhaps this latter term would have been the more courteous of the two. Not that it made much difference to our friend Joseph, whether they called him "cobbler," or "shoemaker:" his destiny in life appeared to be to repair boots and shoes, rather than to make them; but this want of originality in the worthy man's work, did not prevent his having some very original thoughts in his mind; and to have a good, original thought in one's mind, is better any day than to make a new and perfectly original pair of shoes or boots; even of such a pattern as men's eyes

had never seen, or ladies' tortured feet wriggled in before. But this observation, like many others in the world, requires qualification. Whether the original thought is better than the original boots, will depend upon whether a man keeps it to himself or not. Now Joe Flicker held this opinion. He believed that good thoughts were meant, like good boots and shoes, to walk about the world; and they had this advantage,—that they never would wear out. Accordingly, when Joe got a thought, and was sure that it was a genuine good one, and likely to be of benefit to his fellow-creatures, he started it forth in the world, and charged people nothing for the use of it. Whether the world would have given Joe any thing for his thoughts, is, perhaps, a question; but as the cobbler thought that to be the father of a good, original notion was a very high honor, we need not trouble ourselves about his dealings with the world, in relation thereto, nor with the world's dealings with him. If there were any dealings upon this matter at all, they were amicable, and perhaps liberal, for all we know; for Joe was always happy; his eye was always bright; and his lips always wore a smile.

When Joe first started in life, his destiny appeared to be that of all shoemakers; viz., to make span new boots and shoes; and visions, no doubt, often crossed his mind of his rising to eminence in his trade. But whenever he climbed up the hill a little bit, and got

so far as to have half a dozen pairs of boots and shoes in his little window, he invariably tumbled down again; until at last, he really believed it was never meant that he should climb up the hill at all.

This circumstance, no doubt, helped to settle Joe Flicker's position in life as a "cobbler;" or, as his wife, who was fond of a touch of gentility, called him, "a jobbing shoemaker." But there was another circumstance which seemed to point out that Joe was to provide for his family, and benefit his fellow-creatures in the vocation of a "cobbler." Our friend had a positive talent for repairing boots and shoes: he could vamp, and sole, and heel, and turn out an old friend as good as new; and as to those little toe-pieces, which are so familiar to most mothers and nurses of large families, Joe Flicker could make them look quite ornamental; so as to leave it almost a matter of doubt whether the little shoe wasn't better in its last estate than in its first. Joe Flicker took a delight in his work; and many were the dilapidated shoes, that would otherwise have been thrown away, which were set up by his doctoring with, so to speak, a new constitution altogether; and which, instead of lying in a ditch, might be seen in high romps at football and leap-frog on the village green.

Fame brought fortune, to a certain extent, to our friend Joe Flicker. All the neighborhood brought

him boots and shoes to repair; and, as every one was willing to pay a good price for really good work, the worthy man thrived, and did an excellent trade in a small way.

Seeing that his life was thus spent in piecing and patching, is it any wonder that the cobbler's mind was constantly fixed upon the subject of repairs? And, seeing that most of the craft are, more or less, thinking men, is it any wonder that Joe Flicker thought, as he cobbled and patched? He did think; and his mind, taking his stool and bench as a centre, travelled forth into contemplations of many of the problems and relationships of daily life.

Wherever Joe turned, he saw not only that things were, for the most part, what they ought not to be, but also not what they might be. "The tendency of every thing," said the cobbler to himself, "is to go to ruin. As soon as ever you make a shoe, it begins to wear out; as soon as you wind up a clock, it begins to run down; you no sooner build a house, but it begins to want something to keep it up; and if things go beyond a certain point, it is impossible to bring them back." It was in vain that Joe Flicker pondered on a remedy for this: he thought long, and deeply; but such a thing was not to be found.

"But now," said the cobbler to himself, "though we can't remedy this state of things altogether, still, it is our duty, and it certainly will be both to our comfort and advantage, to improve it as much as lies

in our power. The great point, then, is to keep a sharp look-out, and keep every thing in repair;" and upon this principle in life Joe determined to go. "And I'm sure," said the cobbler, when he made this resolution, "I shall be happier and richer for it too. For just look," said he to himself, "at this shoe," as he turned and twisted a small one in his hands: "Mrs. Smith will have to pay 6*d.* for these toe-caps; and she can't well afford that. There are six of them to be shod, and her husband's wages are only sixteen shillings a week. Now I can see all about this shoe in the twinkle of an eye. This is what I call a stitch-in-time shoe; if Mrs. Smith had only sent it to me when the first stitch began to rip, 'twould have cost her only 2*d.* instead of 6*d.*, as it will now. Dear me! when will folk learn to look after repairs? and that in every thing, as well as their shoes."

Joe Flicker might have branched out into a great variety of thoughts, but that his attention was turned to a rapping at the door; and, in a moment after, there entered a long, lanky-looking man, with un-combed hair, and dilapidated clothes; and in his hands he held the skeleton of a pair of boots.

"Here, Joe," said the lanky man, "can you make any thing of these here boots? If any man in the parish can, you are the man."

"Let's see them," answered Joe. "They're very far gone."

"I let them go too far," said the lanky man; "they

were prime boots, 'tis a pity I didn't keep them in repair."

"'Tis a pity you don't keep yourself in repair," said Joe Flicker, looking at him with a glance as sharp as one of the points of his own awls; "'tis a pity, John Thatch, that you don't keep *yourself* in repair;" and he laid strong emphasis on this word "yourself."

Jack Thatch looked hard at the cobbler for a few moments, holding the half-skeleton, half-ghost-like boots at full length from him, and said, in a half-puzzled, half-boozy kind of way,—"Joe Flicker, what do you mean?"

"Throw down those boots," said Joe; "it's no use your trying to make them stand up like respectable boots: throw them down there, poor, ill-used creatures; and I'll tell you what I mean."

"'Tis my belief," said the cobbler, "that every man has only a lease of himself,—and that a repairing one; and the like of his wife and children; and 'tis as plain as that I have this shoe in my hand, that you aren't keeping yourself in repair."

"Go on," said Jack Thatch. "It does a man good to hear you talk; he! he! I don't think I've been in repair for a precious long time."

"I *will* go on," said the cobbler; "whenever I make a beginning I always like to go on until I come to the end. Now, look at your hat: a hat is a man's roof, and yours wouldn't fetch sixpence; I

wonder you ain't dead long before this with cold in your head. And look at your coat! 'tis hanging in ribbons on your back; and then your boots: boots might be said to be a man's foundation; anyhow," said Joe, "they're the lowest story; and from your attic to your basement, you're out of repair."

"Go on, Joe," said John Thatch.

"Yes: I *will* go on, John; and how do you come to be out of repair? Why, by that horrid dram-shop that you're always at; and you'll never be in decent repair as long as you go there."

"Well, *you're* in tidy repair, anyhow," said John Thatch, as he looked at the cobbler's shining face, and decent clothes, and rolled his eyes round the comfortable little room.

"So I am," said Joe. "I'm in what I call tenantable repair; I ain't what the agent calls in decorative repair, — that means painting and gilding, and such like finery — but all good and solid; at least, as good and solid as I can make it: weather proof, you know, not hurt by wind or rain."

"That'll do now," said Jack Thatch; "when will the boots be done?"

"'Twill set me hard to do them at all," answered the cobbler: "still, though I say it, if any man in the parish can do them, I'm the man; but you can't have them for a month. I'm not one of those men that say a fortnight when they mean a month. When I say a day, I mean to keep to it; and I've

promised so many folk before you, that it will be a month before these boots are done."

"Well, go on," said Jack Thatch, "and I'll call for them then."

As soon as the cobbler and his visitor parted, they fell, each of them, into their own particular train of thought. The cobbler, with some difficulty, made Jack's boots stand up; and having accomplished this, he proceeded to address them as if Jack's feet were inside them; and, by consequence, as if Jack himself were there.

"Ah! Cousin Jack," said he, "you got a better start in life than I did; you were sent out into the world bran new, with a neat house and a good business, but see what you're come to. You began to get out of order when you dropped in every day for a half-pint at the "Boar with the Shining Tusks:" and that was the first slate off the roof; and then, when you took to lounging in of an evening, there were the rafters gone; and when you tottered and tumbled out, there were the foundations gone. If I were a pair of boots, I'd rather be thrown away at once, than tumbling about in that fashion. I don't know that 'tis a kindness to repair you at all," said Joe, addressing the boots; "but as I promised to do so, I will; and, perhaps, your owner will be ashamed when he sees you looking so much more decent than himself."

Jack Thatch had acquired that sad, boozy habi-



The Man who kept Himself in Repair. — PAGE 77.



of looking stupid, but he was not always indifferent to what was said ; and, on the present occasion, he was sober, and quite able to take in the remarks the cobbler had made.

"So I'm out of repair," said Jack, "am I? humph; that's a new light to look at one's self in — from the roof down to the cellar— eh! that ain't creditable, is it? especially for a young man who comes of people who always kept themselves up in the world. Well! the sooner I'm put in repair the better, that's all; but before I begin, I'll have a glass;" and being by this time quite close to the "Boar with the Shining Tusks," in he stepped, to take a half-pint. The half-pint was drawn, and stood foaming on the counter, and Jack put his hands in his ragged trousers' pocket, to find wherewithal to pay; but he had not a penny, and he began to apologize to the landlady, as he took the glass in his hands.

But that glass of beer Jack Thatch was never destined to drink; and a very good thing it turned out for him, that he was not.

"Stay, stay," said the landlady, stretching out her fat, rosy arm, and laying hold of the glass; "do you think, John Thatch, that we can always be giving credit? I'd like to know how we can keep the roof over our heads, and pay house rent and taxes, to say nothing of repairs, if we go on in this style; no! no! no more liquor for you, Mr. Thatch, except what you pay down for."

Poor Jack looked stupidly at the landlady, who in turn looked saucily at him, and slowly and sorrowfully turned away from the bar; while his beer was handed over to a customer who was standing by, and who had put down the money on the counter.

"Repairs!" said Jack, slowly to himself, "repairs! she couldn't keep her house in repair, but for my money, and that of other drinking folk; and she does keep her house in repair, doesn't she?" said Jack, looking at the plate-glass windows and the bright new paint; "she keeps her place in repair; and Joe Flicker says I don't keep myself in repair; one and one make two," said Jack, "and, putting these ones together, that I'm out of repair, and the 'Boar with the Shining Tusks' is always looking span new, I'm of opinion that we can't both be kept in repair at the same time; and I'll look to it and try whether I can't do myself up a bit."

So Jack Thatch refrained from the "Boar with the Shining Tusks" for a month, and kept hard at work. It was fortunate that the nature of his work was such that most of it could be done in the half-worn-out slippers, in which he had gone to the cobbler's, otherwise he could not have commenced his new career until his boots were mended; and that would have been a whole month lost.

In due course of time, it came to be the turn of Jack Thatch's boots to be taken in hand. They were now taken down from the wall, where they had

been hung by his cousin the cobbler, partly to be out of the way, partly to be gibbeted as representatives of their owner, who deserved in some way to be made an example of, and partly to be kept in their proper turn ; for Joe Flicker would show them no favor, and there were several others to come before them.

Nor were the boots any losers by thus having to await their turn. During this interval the cobbler had heard of the attempts of his cousin to reform ; and he determined to give him a good start, as he was getting on his legs again. So he soled and heeled and vamped the boots, and stuck a new piece of red lining inside, and polished them up, until the cat made a looking-glass of them, and shook hands with herself in them, in half a friendly and half a suspicious way. Then Joe hung up the boots again, and covered them with a cloth, to keep them perfectly bright, until their owner appeared.

As Jack knew that the cobbler was a man of his word, and that the boots would be surely done to the moment when they were promised, and as he was now ashamed to be seen in the worn slippers, and so generally out of repair, he came to Joe Flicker's shop on the appointed day. And to Jack's credit, it must be chronicled, that he arrived in much better condition than he was in on his first visit ; for he had been able to take a few things out of pawn, and put himself a little in repair.

"Well, Joe, are the boots done?" asked Jack Thatch, as he entered the little shop.

Joe Flicker looked up, and then laid down his awl, and the shoe which he was mending, and finally rose from his bench, and deliberately walked three times round Jack Thatch, without saying a single word which could account for so extraordinary a journey. Having performed these revolutions, he retired backward to his stool, and dropped down upon it, still keeping his eyes fixed upon Jack.

At length he broke silence, and said, "Jack Thatch, you've been and got yourself repaired."

"Yes," said Jack, "I've been repairing myself; and I'm all the better for being a little done up."

"You *are*," said Joe Flicker; and he laid a long, strong emphasis on the word "*are*," — "You *are*. Now sit down here, and tell us all about it."

Then Jack seated himself on the only chair in the room, and told the cobbler how he couldn't get rid of the idea of being out of repair, after what he said; and then, how it was fixed in his mind by the landlady's speech; and then, how horrid it seemed to him that he should be keeping other people's places in repair, at the expense of himself and those belonging to him; while he and his were going to ruin, worse and worse every day; and, — but the cobbler could hold out no longer: jumping hastily up, he rushed to the wall, and unveiled the sparkling boots, and cried, "Jack Thatch, you'll yet be worthy of

those boots; ay, and of much more, too: there they are; and not a penny will I take for them, until you and your wife and your children are all put into thorough repair, and, so to speak, made as good as new."

The tears came into poor Jack's eyes, as the cobbler made him then and there get into the boots, and stand in them with his feet in different attitudes, to see how he looked; and then shook him by the hands, and slapped him on the back, and wished him "Good speed."

"Ah, Joe!" said Jack, "'tis much better to do as you have done,—not to allow one's self to get out of repair,—than to make such a mistake, and repair it ever so well at last. How did you keep right without half the chances I have had?"

"Don't say 'keep right,'" said the cobbler with a serious look: "who keeps right? 'tis just because I knew I was always by nature likely to get out of repair, that I watched myself; and what I say of myself, I may say of all belonging to me too. You see, Jack, here's what I thought. There is a sort of rottenness in every thing that makes it its nature to decay, and get out of repair; and so it will be as long as the world is as it is now. Our bodies! ain't they always getting out of order, and wanting the doctor? our houses! our clothes! our tempers! our business! all things, if left to themselves, go wrong instead of right; and we must be always getting them put to rights."

"Well, Joe, and how did you come to think of all this?"

"I used my eyes," said the cobbler, "and saw it; didn't the very business of my life — always repairing — tell me something about it? And I used this," said Joe; and he pulled out a small book from a kind of little box in his bench; "you know this book well: many people are ashamed of it, but I'm not: 'tis a Bible; and this taught me how all the decay comes; and it showed me where to go to, to get it repaired. I say, first and chief, this has been my counsellor and friend: there would be less want of repairs, if people attended to what it says; and when repairs are wanted, they'd be better done, if they minded it then; but folk are wise enough in their own eyes, and that's the way to become fools."

"Well," said Jack Thatch, "but don't you *do* any thing to keep yourself all right? You're smirking and smiling when other people are frowning and growling; and you always have decent clothes, when many a man with as good earnings is naked; I'd like to know what you *do*."

"Well, cousin," answered the cobbler, "I do all I can to keep myself in repair. Here's this little body, — 'tain't half the size of yours, and it has had a wonderful deal better treatment; but if I were careless about it, I'd soon be laid up and unfitted to work; and then, who'd look after my wife and children here? What's food? isn't it repairs for the

waste of the body? and what's sleep? isn't it the same? so I take care, out of what I earn, to have good, wholesome food, and stout, warm clothes; and I go to bed at decent hours, and get enough of sleep: that's what I do. And when this little room gets foul and close, then I throw open the window, and that repairs it; and so I go on, always repairing, and always keeping in repair. And mind you, Jack Thatch, the great thing is to repair *at once*. 'A stitch in time saves nine.' Many a shoe that comes here with sixpence and eightpence for repairs, would have only been twopence if it had been brought in time. We must not be put out, Jack, at having repairs to do: 'tis unreasonable that we should; 'twill be so as long as we are in this world at all. And remember, things get worse, faster and faster, twice as fast to-morrow, and four times as fast as that the next day; that's a thing to be remembered, when we are letting ourselves go to rack and ruin, as we are by nature inclined to do.

"And I sometimes do some *extra* repairs. When I get seedy, I treat myself to a half-holiday, and go in the train over to the hills, and come home a new kind of man; and this is the way, in part, that I'm always smiling and always happy."

"Well, Joe, but many folk live well, and they're not happy."

"Ay," said Joe; "perhaps they live to eat, and don't eat to live. But I do something more to myself than

this: I'm always keeping my *temper* in repair. You wouldn't believe it," said Joe, "but I'm sometimes inclined to be as sharp as this awl; then I turn to this good friend," — and the cobbler laid his hand on the Book, — "and I go down upon my knees, and I get the better of myself. Believe me, Jack, a man's knees are wonderful tools, if he'd only use them as he ought. And sometimes I sit and think: ay, Jack, you're not much given to thinking, but thought is a wonderful tool, if you have the patience to use it; and I say to myself, 'Joe Flicker, how much better off are you than others!' 'Joe Flicker, how much better off are you than you deserve to be!' 'Joe Flicker, after all, does this trouble matter so very much; won't it soon be over?' 'Joe Flicker, how will you make the best of it? perhaps it needn't be as bad as it looks.' Then I always wind up with this one saying, 'Joe Flicker, 'tis only for a while!'

"I say many such things," said the cobbler, "but these are some of them; and what between the Book, and the knees, and this talk with myself, I very soon come right."

"Well, you're a happy man," said Jack Thatch, who now sat with his legs stretched out before him, and his eyes riveted upon his transformed boots. Whether Jack was oppressed with the responsibility of being in such good boots, after having gone about for so long a time, down at heel in his old slippers, or whether he was meditating how he ought to con-

duct himself in those boots, which were evidently intended for a respectable, well-to-do kind of man, we cannot tell; but so it was, that he looked very serious, and apparently full of thought. In this reverie the cobbler, who was a thinking man himself, allowed his visitor to indulge for a while; and after a considerable pause, he said, "Well, Cousin Jack, what are you thinking about, — admiring the boots still, eh! or what?"



CHAPTER II.

SHOWS HOW MR. JOSEPH FLICKER KEPT HIS WIFE IN REPAIR.

JACK THATCH was roused from his reverie by the cobbler's voice; and the latter, not being quite sure as to whether his question had been heard, again asked his cousin what he was thinking about.

"About my wife," said Jack.

"And a very good thing to think about, too," said the cobbler; "if a wife's worth having, she's worth thinking about; and thinking a great deal about, too. I wish men would think a little more about their wives. There would be a deal more comfort in families if they did."

"Mine gives me a plaguy deal to think about," said Jack Thatch.

. "That's because you don't think enough about her," said the cobbler. "There's a kind of riddle here: and indeed some folk say that wherever there's a woman, there's a riddle; however, here it is: 'The more you think about your wife, the less she'll give you to think about.'"

"I'm not good at riddles," said Jack Thatch; "and what's that in plain English?"

"Why, the meaning of it is this: if you make it your business to take thought for your wife, she'll know she's cared for; and she'll value it, and value you; and she'll try and be a credit to you; and she won't give you cause for anxiety, running into debt, neglecting your children and yourself, and perhaps drinking, driven to it by neglect and ill words, and, it may be, even hard blows. That's not the kind of treatment that women require," said the cobbler; "they're very brittle kind of things. So far from being banged about, either with words or blows, or any thing unkind, they require a deal of care. They're likely enough to go out of order, if they're left to themselves, without our doing them any harm; in fact, they're like you and me, they want to be kept always in repair. But here comes Mrs. Flicker," said the cobbler, with an extra smile on his jolly face; "here she comes, and right glad I am always to see her, although the chances are a hundred to one she wants something or other."

But this sentiment the cobbler had all to himself

Jack Thatch was not at all anxious to see Mrs. Flicker: for the latter was a very out-spoken, and indeed, sometimes, vehement woman; and she had more than once given her cousin a bit of her mind about his conduct to his wife and children.

Now this the cobbler knew very well; and as poor Jack was evidently on the mending hand, he did not want him to get a lecture from Mrs. Flicker, at this particular time. The only thing, therefore, was to put him out of the way; and this could be done only by stuffing him into a little kind of cupboard, which, at that particular time, was fortunately empty; but which generally held the cobbler's stores of leather. In a trice, accordingly, Jack found himself imprisoned; and, in another trice, Mrs. Flicker was in her husband's little room.

" Well, my dear,
Welcome here,"

half said, half sang, the cobbler. " You know, Betsey, though I'm very fond of singing, I never made a song in my life, but this one; and I sing it whenever you come to visit me at my bench. Come, sit down a minute on that chair."

" I can't sit down," said Mrs. Flicker; " for Mrs. Stone is going to Burnthorpe to-day, and she offered me a ride in her cart, if I chose to go. Drapery is much cheaper there than here, and Mary wants a new frock, and Joseph can't go longer without two

more shirts; and, as we don't run credit, I'm come to know if you can give me some money."

"How much will they be?" said Joe.

"They'll be fifteen shillings the lot."

"Fifteen shillings," repeated the cobbler, — "and five for a new ribbon for your bonnet, Betsey: that's twenty; and there's a sovereign."

"But you can't spare it?" said Mrs. Flicker.

"Ay, ay," answered her husband; "I can always spare something for my wife. I've saved that sovereign on purpose, when I heard you say at Christmas that you thought the young ones were getting shabby; and I'll never forget the mother, when I remember the children," said the cobbler, — "no, never;" and he cried, "catch," and sent the coin tumbling over and over in the air, until it fell into his wife's hand.

"There's a good man," said Mrs. Flicker; and she nodded twenty little nods, of a very loving kind, at her husband; which nods the latter apparently received quite safely, for he looked brim full of satisfaction and delight, and sent them all back to his wife again. "Now I'm off," said Mrs. Flicker; and giving her husband a farewell nod at the door, she disappeared.

And a great thing it was for Jack Thatch that Mrs. Flicker had taken herself off so quickly; for the closet was so small, that he could not have remained there long; and much he dreaded an inter-

view with this good woman, who knew well how little he had done for his wife and family.

Jack first peered cautiously out of the cupboard door, to make sure that the last particle of Mrs. Flicker had disappeared; then he came out: and on the cobbler's assuring him that his wife would not return, he seated himself again in his former seat.

"Now, Jack," said the cobbler, "you saw, or at least you heard me do a little bit of repairs. I repair Mrs. Flicker from time to time, just as I do myself; for we're both made of the same flesh and blood. Men don't always remember that. They seem to think that women are always to keep on working, and being worried with children, and no one knows what, and yet never want any thing to keep them up. That's how some women become drunkards. They have no one to cheer them up a bit, and they think spirits and beer will do it; but they make a great mistake. Here's another of my riddles," said the cobbler. "How can a man keep his wife in good spirits, without spending any thing on liquor?"

"And how often do you repair Mrs. Flicker?" asked Jack Thatcher.

"I'm always at it," answered the cobbler, "more or less; for, d'ye see, Cousin Jack, women require to be kept a trifle in decorative as well as substantial repair; and I do enjoy seeing her nice, that I

do. I'm not a man for fandango finery, not I; but I like what's a little tasty, provided 'tis good, and in a quiet way. You'll see, she'll bring home as neat a bit of ribbon as ever you saw; and she'll look all the fresher with that little bit of trimming, though it isn't fine, and isn't dear.

"Ever since I got Mrs. Flicker," said the cobbler, "and I took up this notion of 'Repairs,' I've put it in practice on her; and so she is what she is to-day. Some folk starve their poor wives, for they spend their wages, you know how; but I said to myself, 'How can a woman keep up, if she isn't well fed? and how can she respect herself, if you don't give her the means of being respectable?' and I'm proud to say," said the cobbler, drawing his waxed threads so tight that the wonder was they didn't break, and holding them there, "I'm proud to say, she has never wanted since the day I called her mine. But there are times, Jack, when all the good food in the world won't nourish, — times when the spirits sink, and the heart sickens, and the nerves go all astray, and nobody can tell where the repairs are wanting, or how they are to be done. Then I have kind words for her; and they seem almost always to find out the sore places, and drop like oil upon them, and heal them up. But there are times, Jack, when even these won't do. Then I bring out this book; and I find that it can do for her and me what nothing else can; and I try these," said the cobbler, laying down

the shoe he was mending, and putting a hand on each knee; "and if I were to tell you how much all this has brought us through, you wouldn't believe it; no, nor would anybody, unless they tried, and found it out for themselves. You hear folk making sport of religion, and of prayer, and saying, 'there's nothing in it;' but there's two ways of trying a thing; and if folk were not earnest and real, what wonder if they found no good?"

"'Tis my wife's temper that troubles me," said Jack Thatch; "she's wonderful fretty, and at times fractious, too."

"Ah," said the cobbler, "when this happens, she's out of repair; and you should set to work and put her to rights, as soon as ever you can. I take just as much pains to keep my good woman's temper right, as any thing else."

"Why, to look at Mrs. Flicker," interrupted Jack Thatch, "no one would think that her temper was ever put out."

"Jack Thatch," said the cobbler, a little quickly "my wife is only a woman. She's flesh and blood; and what worries flesh and blood, will worry her. Women have often a great deal more to worry them than men; and, what's more, they can't get away from their worries as we can. The wonder to me is, that any woman that brings up a large family of children has any temper left; yes! that there's any of her left at all; and I act accordingly. I believe,

as I have told you already, that there are ways above this world of keeping us up in our troubles, and repairing us when we are wearing out; but I know 'tis my duty to *do* all I can, and to use whatever means I have; and so I pray and work too."

"What kind of things do you do?" asked Jack Thatch; who, although he understood by this time, how the body was to be kept in repair, could not, for the life of him, imagine how this desirable result was to be obtained in the matter of the temper.

"Well," answered the cobbler, "sometimes I gather all the children, and have them out in the garden for a play, and leave Mrs. Flicker the house all to herself. Believe me, 'tis very soothing to have a little quiet now and again, and be able to move about without looking to see that you don't tread on some one. I always find her the better for that. And I generally manage so as to have five or six shillings in my pocket, for an occasion, whenever one comes; and though we can't go for change of air for long together, as gentlefolk do, still we can have a little turn now and again; and I take her off with me for a jaunt. Sometimes we go by rail, and sometimes in one of the neighbor's spring carts; but, however we go, I always find she's the better of it for weeks after she comes back. In my opinion, Jack, we're all likely to become seedy if we don't get a little change from time to time; it gives one something new to think about; and it gets rid of a

great many gloomy thoughts that the mind is likely to brood upon ; and it gives one a general stir-up ; and without being able exactly to explain what this is, it means a good deal. It seems to me that all the little troubles of life keep gathering, gathering, until they come to a head, and they must then be got rid of somehow ; and we find that the fresh air often blows them away.

“Then, about that little present that you saw me make Mrs. Flicker, or at any rate that you heard, when the sovereign fell smack into her hand : ’twas but a trifle, still it showed her that I had been thinking of her ; and women like well to be thought about. And now, Jack Thatch, if you take my advice, you’ll do as I do, and set about repairing Mrs. Thatch a bit. Poor woman ! to see her old, broken shoes, and battered bonnet, and ragged gown, she needs much. And never you mind if you can’t do it a great deal all at once ; just do a little at a time ; only, begin at once, — that’s the great thing. And if you begin repairing her, you’ll see she’ll go on repairing herself ; for she’ll get new heart and spirit ; and when there are two of you at it, depend upon it, it will get on much faster than you think. Just look at those boots,” said the cobbler, pointing with professional pride at the shining coverings of Jack Thatch’s legs ; “how could you walk about in those boots, and see her slipshod, and the children out at the toes ? Remember, you are all a part of the

same premises ; and all must be kept in order together."

"But it will come uncommon hard upon a man," said Jack Thatch, "to keep wife and children, too, in order. If I keep the woman, the woman ought to keep the children."

"That's just a part of the selfishness," said the cobbler, "that there's a deal too much of in the world. Don't the children belong to you both? Ain't one of you the father of them, and the other the mother? ain't some of them like you, and some of them like her, and some of them like both of you together? and how can you make out that you have nothing to do with the children?"

"Well, Joe Flicker, I feel uncommon as though I should like to be cross with you, but I can't: I'll try the wife, but I won't promise the children; and even if I wished, 'twould be no good, for I never knew what to do with them in my life."

"I'll tell you what to do," answered the cobbler; "you set about repairing them in their bodies, as quick as you can. You spend your money on warm clothes for them; and get their boots and shoes mended up; and buy them new ones as soon as you can; and that will repair them outside. Then get them good bread and milk for their meals, and a bit of meat when you can; and that will repair their inside; and 'tis sorely they want it, if I know aright. And then, give them a penny toy now and again; a

penny ain't much to spend on one's young family; and be with them for a minute or two when you can spare the time, and tumble them about; and never mind letting them give you a tumble, too. Make a tumble for yourself, Jack, if they can't make it for you; and then laugh as loud as you can; or, if that don't suit you, why, pretend to cry; that'll do as well; and then they'll come to make you well; and they'll be twice as fond of you; and you don't know how fond you'll get of them. Yes, Jack, though you're a great big fellow, you'll be ready to cry if any thing is the matter with them. Then, man, your children will love you; and they'll obey you from love, and your wife won't have half the trouble with them; and, as I've just now said, you'll all be in repair together; and a very nice family you'll be."

Whether Jack Thatch saw any visions of brightness in the brilliant boots which glittered upon his feet, or no, we cannot tell: but some such vision certainly passed before him; for, after a long pause, he said, "A very nice family we'll be: yes! we'll all be in repair together; and a very nice family we'll be." So saying, Mr. Thatch rose from his seat, drew down his trousers over his boots, cast a look of ineffable scorn at his old slippers, stretched out his hand to the cobbler, and, without more ado, marched out of the little shop, with the air of a man

that was well set up on his legs, and didn't mean to trip for any one.

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From time to time, the cobbler heard intelligence of the private life of his cousin; and every thing seemed to promise that he, and his house, and household, together with their tempers, and boots and shoes, and clothes, and all belonging to them, would soon be very different from what they had been for many a long day. For, to Jack Thatch's credit, it must be told, that he set about all these needful repairs at once. He had a Book like Joe Flicker's, and he took to reading it; and he had knees like Joe's, and he took to using them; and he had a head liké the cobbler's, with brains inside, and he began to use it, too; and he found, that by reading and thinking and praying, and then manfully setting to work, an immense deal could be done. Jack's wife was a sensible woman, that didn't talk too much; and, though she greatly wondered, she allowed herself to be repaired, and never said a word about the past. Only at times she felt her heart swelling within her; not as though it would burst, and let out the deep, dark waters which once had been within, but as if it were full of all sorts of cordials that ever had been made, together with sunshine and mountain air, and laughing-gas, and happiness, and singing, and a hodge-podge of delight fizzing and

sparkling and popping, and shooting the cork clean out of her heart; altogether unlike any thing she had ever felt since she was a child.

And when the good woman's heart thus swelled, and she could contain herself no longer, she used to sing out, and praise the One who had looked at her poor husband on his knees, and taught him out of the Book, and put good thoughts into his head, and given him the heart to carry them out. And, at times, she would go to her room, and shut herself in, and while she was there one day, Jack was listening at the door; and without saying a word, he walked in, and knelt down by her side. And neither of them said any thing, though they both tried; and they got up off their knees, and looked at each other, and those looks explained all; and they never had much talk about what had passed; for their eyes had tongues: yes; and though they couldn't say a word on their knees, their hearts had tongues; and as once they had knelt together, they seemed to feel as though they could henceforth go well through life together, — and so they did.

And under Joe Flicker's directions, and with his helping advice, Jack Thatch started even still more extensively in the repairing line, than he had thought of at first. For, when in the course of a little time, he came to order a new pair of boots for the winter, for his wife, and six pairs for his six children, he and Joe had another conversation, of which, though it

produced further great results, we can now give only the sum.

Jack Thatch told the cobbler all he went through in his efforts to repair himself, his wife and children, his house, and all he had. He owned, like an honest man, what he felt: that he never could have succeeded if he had not sought help above his own. And he gave his experiences also of his efforts with the various children, for whom he now came to get a supply of boots. "I tried the laughing," said Jack, "and it did with all but little Sophy; you know she's delicate, and she was very shy of me; for 'twas so strange to see me with her brothers and sisters at all. But when the baby tumbled me down, and I began to cry, poor little Sophy couldn't stand that, and keep on her stool any longer; so she crept over to me, and kissed me, and wiped my eyes with her little ragged frock; and ever since that we've been like father and child; and to come to an end, we're all as happy as a family can be. To be sure," said Jack, "'twas rather queer to be knocked down by one's own baby, and to feel it crawling all over one like an earwig, but I got used to it very soon; and 'tis a very cheap way of making a friend."

"Now, Jack," said the cobbler, "you must go on and do still more in this repairing line. You must keep your business in repair, by watching every little thing. Never let a customer be dissatisfied, or have

a wrong impression of any thing, or be disobliged; keep always repairing your stock; keep your customers' good opinion of you in repair; never mind trouble: no, not even a little loss, if it is to do a stroke of repairs; remember, that nothing will *keep* right in this world; it must be *kept* right; and you'll have to be at this work as long as ever you live. And do for your neighbors what you do for yourself. Never pass by a chance of putting them into repair, when you get an opportunity of doing so. If you see a poor neighbor in want, hold out your hand to him; give him a bit of what you can spare. And if you see a poor fellow down-hearted, or down-trodden, give him a kind word. Or if you see a poor, foolish fellow going wrong, put him in the right way; and teach him the secret of the Book, the knees, and the head. Yes; and if you see neighbors quarrelling, set them right; perhaps ten minutes' kindly talk will do it, and repair what otherwise may come to ruin altogether. If we do this, Jack, we shall not have lived for nothing. We may be poor, and not have the chance of doing any great thing; or if we get the chance, perhaps we couldn't do it; but our business is to try, and do what lies in our power; and 'tis for that we shall have to give our account by and by."

Thus did Jack Thatch. And he and the cobbler became fast friends; and though Jack became known as a prosperous tradesman, and a happy

family man, and a man who was respectable and respected, that which he took most pleasure in, himself, was the thought that he was

“THE MAN WHO KEPT HIMSELF IN REPAIR.”

Good reader, you have now come to the end of the story of Jack Thatch; and you have seen how from having been a dilapidated, wretched, good-for-nothing creature, he became a decent, happy, useful man. The writer hopes that you have been interested, and, perhaps, entertained; but he has a further hope, and that is, that you may be profited also. For the end of all reading should be profit.

Hence, permit yourself to be asked, whether there be not some points in which you also are out of repair; and not altogether as your best friends, or, perhaps, as even you yourself, on reflection, think you ought to be.

And if, even at the first consideration of this question, you do not see any thing particularly amiss, just take a walk round yourself, and inspect your various ways and habits, both as regards your fellow-men, and your own daily life. And it may be that the inspector will report that there are many little holes which want filling; some rust which should be cleaned off; some pipes which should be unstopped; some parts of your premises which need a repairing hand.

There are holes through which evil reports get into your brain; stop them up. There is a door which should be generally kept shut, which swings open too easily, and lets out unkind words; get a new lock, and put it on, and keep them in. There are fireplaces which won't draw, for the chimneys want sweeping; and so you are cold in yourself, and cold to your neighbors; get rid of whatever is hindering warmth and love, and be comfortable yourself, and make others so, by a glowing, cheery, sparkling heart. And keep from looking dingy and damp; and train up a few flowering creepers on the walls of your outward life, so as to remind men of freshness and beauty, cheering the hearts of those who pass by, blessing all who see you, even though they know but little of your real inner self. For pleasant smiles and words and looks are good garnishing for solid worth; and it may be that others will be won to what is lovely and of good report; and you in your own sphere will teach many to follow the example of

"THE MAN WHO KEPT HIMSELF IN REPAIR."

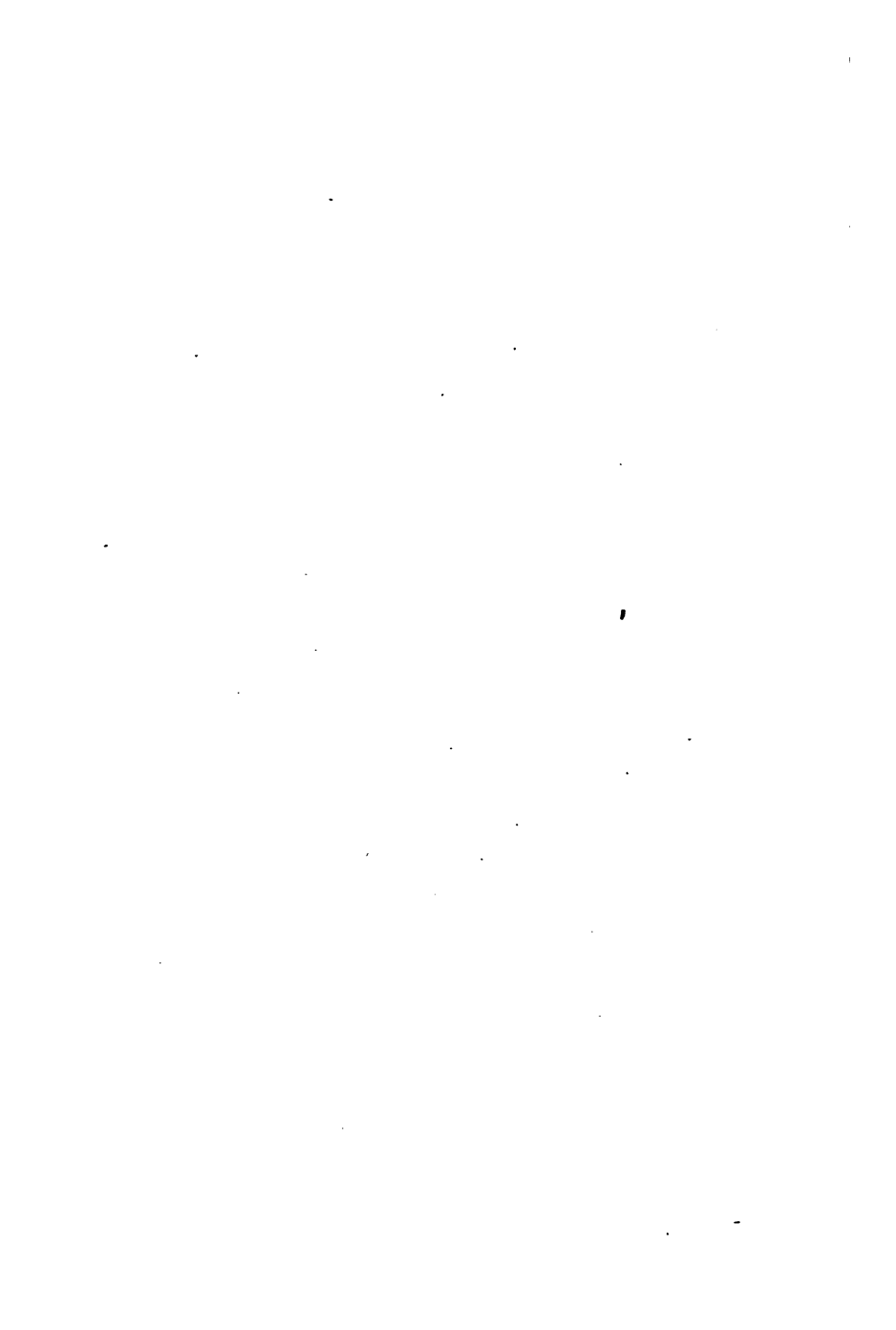






BESSIE GREY.







BESSIE GREY.

BY MRS. MARTHA FERRY LOWE.

OUR little red house stands upon the hill ;
The path runs down between the elms and pines
Until it stops before my father's mill,
That sits upon the brook, o'erhung with vines,
And willows, which the clematis entwines,
And silver-leaf, that stoops beneath the stream
To dip its radiant forehead till it shines,
Reburnished, in the little waves that gleam.

My mother sleeps within the church-yard nigh ;
The sickly yarrow and the golden-rod
Are waving in the wan and pallid grass :
They stare on me ungently as I pass,
And, weary in their loneliness, they nod.

I will not see the yellow mounds, near by,
Where thin and sallow weeds their station keep,
To make a feeble mock at them who sleep;
I plant blush-roses 'mong the poplar-trees,
And think upon the fields of heaven, not these.

My father works away, from morn till night:
He is a kindly man, and cares for me;
Not oft he speaks; his eye on me will light,
And then I know he is not dull to see.
He is more free of late; this is the way
He spoke to me, — I think 'twas yesterday:
“Hie, Bessie, get thee gone unto the town,
And buy a gown of Ruel Morton's son:
He'll like to sell it thee, and he'll not frown
To see thee wear it either, little one.”
And Robin laughed and pulled me by the curls:
He knew not why, for he is but a child.
My brother's eyes are blue as any girl's:
The summer suns have made him brown and wild.

I do not care about the foolish gown,
And yet I'm young and fair; I am not sad;
I love the sweet green earth, it makes me glad:
But, oh! I do not love old Ruel's son.
He is a gentle youth; his eye is bright,
When I go in to sell my eggs to him;
He looks so pleasant when I come in sight;
I think I will not go again at night:

The old man's eyes are growing very dim,
And Gilbert now is there at candle-light.

I know I am not vain : there's many a one
Who's better far than Bessie of the Mill ;
But I do love my own sweet ways and will,
And foolish fancies howsoe'er they run ;
I cut the apple at the August noon,
And hang it at the door in golden rings ;
I heed not Robin when the corn he brings ;
I'm listening to a little mellow tune,
Now gay, now sad, my spirit always sings.
I sit alone between the elms, and mend
And knit my stockings while the brook runs by,
But faster run my sweet thoughts, lovingly,
One on the other, and they nèver end :
And yet I know not what my longing is,
I would not have it answered if I could :
To dream of nobleness is very good :
To dream of love and chivalry is bliss.

But Gilbert likes to sell his yarn and beer,
'Tis better far, he'd say, than dreaming here :
The shop is lighted with a flickering lamp :
'Tis better far than in the meadows damp,
To find the gentians looking at the skies,
With their great fringed, wonderful, blue eyes,
And see the gold moon up the hill-side rise.
Yet he is mindful : when the buyers rough

Stand round the counter with their country stuff,
He answers them with friendly decent speech :
If I am in the store, his looks beseech
That they will end their sordid talk ; this ring
Of " pay me what thou ow'st," — some petty thing,
A half a cord of wood, perhaps, the debt ;
The bag of carrots will not cancel it.
They're striding in and out for half a dime ;
And comes a woman meekly, let her bide
Her time until they choose to step aside ;
And then go home and sweep her kitchen clean,
And blow the horn for them at dinner-time,
Nor speak unless her words do something mean.
Are they not men, can vote for whom they please,
And work whene'er they like, or take their ease
In this great country, where the farmer can
Be just as good as any other man ?

This suits not Gilbert : blushing oft, he deems
A woman better than himself, meseems.
'Tis not the girls alone so young as I
He treats with such a kind civility :
He serves Old Patty with her limping feet
Before the farmer's wife, so trig and neat ;
He holds poor Milly's pail of berries too,
Her arm is aching all the summer through, —
And if a handful from her measure flies, —
It may be unawares, — I mind he pays
A little more, lest he should wrong her eyes ;
For she is growing old and blind, he says.

I wish he would not love . . . not watch me so ;
There's Phoebe with her eyes so bright and black :
She's ever running to the door, I know.
The oil is out ; her father's pipe did crack ;
Or 'tis a knot of wool which she doth lack,
She "could not work another stitch without :"
She holds it to the light ; she looks about ;
"How strange she cannot find the purple skein !"
She pulls the worsteds all apart again ;
She questions Gilbert, "which he thinks is best ;
Will he not tell her which is prettiest ?"
He speaks as pleasantly to her as me, —
To any one, I mean, within the shop.
Why should he not ? Is Phoebe plain to see ?
Does she not let her pretty eyelids drop ? —
Come, come, that's not the way he looks at thee,
Thee, Bessie, when thy errand makes thee stop.

What if he marries her some morning fine ?
Maybe she has a warmer heart than mine ;
It would not take him long, I venture say,
To find the warmest spot, — perchance to-day.
Well, there'll be no one to molest me then,
All day I'll sing my songs, and dream of men
Who're young and brave ; of such a magic tongue,
It holds you captive like a ballad sung ;
How some May-morning I shall go away,
And see the world, and read in gentle books,
And hear sweet music, and the daily talk

Of something all unknown to country folks,
And learn how soft-voiced women dainty walk,
With beauteous children copying their sweet looks,
And husbands hanging on their very speech,
And love's eye-worship passing each to each.

Is this the world? Maybe 'tis not so fair,
And after all I'm only dreaming there.
The mill will stand as now it does at noon,
Robin will whistle low the self-same tune,
My plates be ready for the morrow's day,
The old clock strike in just the droning way.
Yet what of this? my days will be my own,
And I shall wander round the mill alone.
What's that, a tear? can't be I'm crying? Yes:
I did not use to be so strange as this.
Well, well, I'll cry it out; a good smart shower
Will brush away the cobwebs from this hour:
They tangle up my thoughts; I cannot see
The way I used to go, so light and free.
Was't only yesterday I went to town,
To buy that hateful gown?

Hark! who is that? 'Tis Gilbert, as I live!
What business sends him up here from the town?
He'll see I have been crying: can I give
My hat a twist, and make it hide my face?
I'll braid away upon my palm-leaf crown.
Oh dear! Where is the strand? I've lost my place;

Perhaps he'll go up to the door and rap :
No, he will wake my father at his nap.
I'll meet him ; no ; — he sees I'm all alone ; —
He turns this way ; — how handsome he has grown !
What shall I say ? I wish he'd mind the store,
Nor be abroad, when folks are at the door.

“ Good-day, Sir Gilbert : you're at holiday,
You who can never leave that blessed store,
Who sit all day and count the silver o'er.”

“ Am I to blame, kind Bessie, that I may
Not ever see the sunbeams play
Upon the twinkling grass at noon ;
Nor watch the crickets when the moon
Is high above the elms that sway,
Nor hear the bullfrog sing his tune ?
“ There was a time, I was a boy,
It comes right up to me to-day :
It was the very first of May,
The air was dancing with its joy,
And you and I were in the pine-woods playing,
I wondered all the world was not a-Maying.
Since then I have forgot the May-flowers' smell,
And how to find them, I could never tell.

“ My hands, you say, do count the change :
So be't. Am I ashamed of that, —
Ashamed to say that I have sat
The long hours through, nor ever run

To do a thing so very strange
As look out at the stars and sun?
Oh, you would shame me, Bessie Grey.
If you had ever seen me lie
Upon the grass and drink the day,
And hear my little brothers cry
For bread to eat! Not I! Not I!"

"Your father has a stalwart arm, 'tis said:
Can he not keep the children warmed and fed?"

"His arm is strong; but 'tis his soul is weak;
The courage is clean gone from out his breast.
It faded when he saw my mother die,
And all day long he did but sigh and sigh;
His very voice is changed, when he doth speak,
And then the rent came due, — you know the rest."

"I know not, Gilbert, I know not."

"Why, Bessie, 'twas the talk, I thought,
Of half the village folk you meet."

"I go not often, Gilbert, to the street."

"They pressed him hard, and even took
My mother's picture from his room.
Oh, how could I their insults brook?
He settled into quiet gloom;

And when he rallied from his mood,
He was as kind and good
Even as a little child. .
But ah ! he knew no more ;
His part in life was o'er ;
He took his buttered bread and smiled."

"And you? And you?"

"I've done whate'er
I could, this dreary, dreary year."

"O Gilbert! all on you has come."

"But then, the children laughed when I came
home ;
My father takes his comfort in his way
Beside his walnut fire : they thought to fit
A paltry stove in place of it.
I heard one to the other say,
'The chimney eats the wood.' I said ' Good sir,
Take, if you dare, that fireplace away !'
And not a single brick they tried to stir.
My father lights his pipe in cheerful mood,
And picks the old nails from the bits of wood
He gathers all around to blaze his logs.
I trust ere long to pay these hungry dogs."

"And you have fed and clothed the three
No word of this has come to me."

"Yes, I have counted money as you know."

"Gilbert, forget, forget that I said so."

"I told you that I had forgot
How on the flowers the sunlight glanced;
I have not seen for years the spot
Where we around the May-pole danced.
But I have not forgotten her,
The girl who let me lead her home
(The May-flowers all around us grew;
The dark came on before we knew),
Who put her frightened hand in mine
And walked beneath the low moonshine;
And how the mothers were astir,
And wondered why we had not come.
For I have watched her many a day
As she went forth upon her way:
She was too fair for me to see,
But could I turn away my eye?
I looked whenever she went by,
And thought to make her care for me.
And she was learned, and I a fool:
I had no time to go to school;
I scarcely on a page did look,
Save when I taught our baby-boy
To read his little spelling-book.

"There was a time I thought to go,
If I the money once could earn,

By keeping close at my employ,
And from the world a little gain.
Bessie, I knew that I could learn,
For something in me told me so ;
But, ah ! the way was never plain.
I knew I loved the very things
That made that girl so sweet to see.
She spoke : I felt as if on wings :
I loved the beautiful and true,
And they would blossom forth in me
If I could win her company ;
Without her I could nothing do.
She spoke, — a common ' Yes ' or ' No,'
Or ' Thank you,' said so soft and low ;
And what a wondrous charm did fall
Upon the air that felt the sound !
And every thing was great around ;
But I was small, but I was small !
Yet I was not a boor at heart,
Somehow the time would never come
When I could break me from my home,
And from my feeble parents part.
" Of late, our little fortunes mend ;
A friend has opened now the way —
With his good name, which he doth lend —
To brighter hopes ; thank God, I may
Now lay by for a rainy day.
" But what of that ? It gives me right
To seek a partner for my life ;

To leave my little store to-night,
And ask a woman for my wife.
Yet I am what I was before,
The same poor Gilbert, and no more :
The money does not make me wise
Nor great nor noble in her eyes."

"No, Gilbert ; not the money, true ;
For something else is teaching you."

"What, Bessie, are you crying ? What ?
Sobbing you are ? 'Tis kind of you.
I thank you, thank you ; I will go.
I cannot have your pity so.
I am not proud : it is not that ;
I'm glad to have your kindness too ;
But I am sad enough. God knows
I would not vex your sweet repose."

"Stay ! stay ! Who was the maiden, she
You named awhile ago to me ?"

"You know her, Bessie Grey you know."

"O Gilbert ! say you will forgive, — forgive :
I am not worthy by your side to live.
Gilbert, O Gilbert ! scorn me now and go :
You are a hero, I a girl of dreams, —
A girl of dew and tears and thin moon-beams.

You have been fighting manfully and brave,
And I have whiled the hours that Heaven gave,
Rocked by the whirring mill and running streams."

"Bessie, you were as far above to see
As yonder swallow up to heaven bent;
So beautiful and pure you were to me."

"Gilbert, you were so near to men, I ween
They loved you every single step you went.
O Gilbert, you were noble: I was mean."

"See, now, the swallow flies unto the eaves,
And love-words to her little children leaves,
And food to every open mouth she gives.

"Who is it combs her Robin's tangled hair,
And smooths his collar with a patient care,
And dusts the miller's apron every morn,
And lifts the buckets full of maple sap,
And brings the golden butter at the dawn,
And calls the hungry chickens to her lap?
Who knows them all, each brownish spot and speck,
And lets them from her gentle fingers peck,
And perch upon her beautiful white neck?"

"How know you, sir, what hour I feed my brood?
You have been spying on us through the wood."

"You should not scold me, Bessie Grey, for it:

Just now you blamed me that I did not quit,
For grass and trees and dew, the dusky store ;
I came this morn, but never once before.

“ If you are dreaming, when you live each day
A life so pure and good, for others' sake,
I'm thinking it is quite as good a way
To dream, then, Bessie, as to be awake.”

“ But, Gilbert, you — ”

“ No more of me, I pray :
I would not hear your praises, had not I
A wish you saw me in a partial way, —
A wish to gain the prize for which I try, —
The prize so far above me, far above —
A wish — come, tell me if you love me, say ? ”

“ If you will tell me what it is to love.”

“ I'll go : perchance to-morrow you'll find out.”

“ No, stay ! I thought I hated you to-day ;
And can it be that I have turned about ? ”

“ You love me now, you love me now, you say ? ”

“ It looks like that ; — come, do not kiss me so.”

“ To-morrow morning will you hate again ? ”

"Come then, and I will tell you if I know
Before my father swings adown the lane
To milk the cows, and Robin's curly head
Is moist and shining, as he sleeps in bed,
While all is silent in the wood and glen,
And on the grass are little beads of dew,
Come, Gilbert, come, and I will tell you true,
If I do love you, or do hate you then!"





CHRISTMAS WAITS IN BOSTON.





CHRISTMAS WAITS IN BOSTON.

BY REV. EDWARD E. HALE.

[Reprinted from the "Boston Daily Advertiser."]

CHAPTER I.

I ALWAYS give myself a Christmas present.

And on this particular year the present was a carol party, which is about as good fun, all things consenting kindly, as a man can have.

Many things must consent, as will appear. First of all, there must be good sleighing; and second, a fine night for Christmas eve. Ours are not the carollings of your poor shivering little East Angles or South Mercians, who have to plod round afoot in countries which do not know what a sleigh-ride is.

I had asked Harry to have sixteen of the best voices in the chapel school to be trained to five or six good carols, without knowing why. We did not care to disappoint them if a February thaw setting in

on the 24th of December should break up the spree before it began. Then I had told Howland that he must reserve for me a span of good horses, and a sleigh that I could pack sixteen small children into, tight-stowed. Howland is always good about such things, knew what the sleigh was for, having done the same in other years, and made the span four horses of his own accord, because the children would like it better, and "it would be no difference to him." Sunday night, as the weather nymphs ordered, the wind hauled round to the north-west and every thing froze hard. Monday night, things moderated, and the snow began to fall steadily,—so steadily; and so Tuesday night the Metropolitan people gave up their unequal contest, all good men and angels rejoicing at their discomfiture, and only a few of the people in the very lowest *Bolgie* being ill-natured enough to grieve. And thus it was, that by Thursday evening was one hard compact roadway from Copp's Hill to the Bone-burner's Gehenna, fit for good men and angels to ride over, without jar, without noise, and without fatigue to horse or man. So it was that when I came down with Lycidas to the chapel at seven o'clock, I found Harry had gathered there his eight pretty girls and his eight jolly boys, and had them practising for the last time,

"Carol, carol, Christians,
Carol joyfully;
Carol for the coming
Of Christ's nativity."

I think the children had got inkling of what was coming, or perhaps Harry had hinted it to their mothers. Certainly they were warmly dressed, and when, fifteen minutes afterwards, Howland came round himself with the sleigh, he had put in as many rugs and bear-skins as if he thought the children were to be taken new-born from their respective cradles. Great was the rejoicing as the bells of the horses rang beneath the chapel windows, and Harry did not get his last *da capo* for his last carol. Not much matter indeed, for they were perfect enough in it before midnight.

Lycidas and I tumbled in on the back seat, each with a child in his lap to keep us warm; I flanked by Sam Perry, and he by John Rich, both of the mercurial age, and therefore good to do errands. Harry was in front somewhere flanked in like wise, and the other children lay in miscellaneously between, like sardines when you have first opened the box. I had invited Lycidas, because, besides being my best friend, he is the best fellow in the world, and so deserves the best Christmas eve can give him. Under the full moon, on the still white snow, with sixteen children at the happiest, and with the blessed memories of the best the world has ever had, there can be nothing better than two or three such hours.

"First, driver, out on Commonwealth Avenue. That will tone down the horses. Stop on the left after you have passed Fairfield Street." So we

dashed up to the front of Haliburton's palace, where he was keeping his first Christmas tide. And the children, whom Harry had hushed down for a square or two broke forth with good full voice under his strong lead in

"Shepherd of tender sheep,"

singing with all that unconscious pathos with which children do sing, and starting the tears in your eyes in the midst of your gladness. The instant the horses' bells stopped their voices began. In an instant more we saw Haliburton and Anna run to the window and pull up the shades, and in a minute more faces at all the windows. And so the children sung through Clement's old hymn. Little did Clement think of bells and snow, as he taught it in his Sunday school there in Alexandria. But perhaps to-day, as they pin up the laurels and the palm in the chapel at Alexandria, they are humming the words, not thinking of Clement more than he thought of us. As the children closed with

"Swell the triumphant song
To Christ, our King,"

Haliburton came running out, and begged me to bring them in. But I told him, "No," as soon as I could hush their shouts of "Merry Christmas;" that we had a long journey before us, and must not alight by the way. And the children broke out with

"Hail to the night,
Hail to the day,"

rather a favorite, — quicker and more to the childish taste perhaps than the other, — and with another “Merry Christmas” we were off again.

Off, the length of Commonwealth Avenue, to where it crosses the Brookline branch of the Mill-Dam, dashing along with the gayest of the sleighing-parties as we came back into town, up Chestnut Street, through Louisburg Square; ran the sleigh into a bank on the slope of Pinckney Street in front of Walter’s house; and, before they suspected there that any one had come, the children were singing, —

“Carol, carol, Christians,
Carol joyfully.”

Kisses flung from the window; kisses flung back from the street. “Merry Christmas” again with a good-will, and then one of the girls began

“When Anna took the baby,
And pressed his lips to hers,”

and all of them fell in so cheerily. O dear me! it is a scrap of old Ephrem the Syrian, if they did but know it! And when, after this, Harry would fain have driven on, because two carols at one house was the rule, how the little witches begged that they might sing just one song more there, because Mrs. Alexander had been so kind to them, when she showed them about the German stitches. And then up the hill and over to the North End, and as far as we could get the horses up into Moon Court, that they might sing to the Italian image-man who

gave Lucy the boy and dog in plaster, when she was sick in the spring. For the children had, you know, the choice of where they would go, and they select their best friends, and will be more apt to remember the Italian image-man than Chrysostom himself, though Chrysostom should have "made a few remarks" to them seventeen times in the chapel. Then the Italian image-man heard for the first time in his life

"Now is the time of Christmas come,"

and

"Jesus in his babes abiding."

And then we came up Hanover Street and stopped under Mr. Gerry's chapel, where they were dressing the walls with their evergreens, and gave them

"Hail to the night,
Hail to the day;"

and so down State Street and stopped at the "Advertiser" office, because, when the boys gave their "Literary Entertainment," Mr. Hale put in their advertisement for nothing, and up in the old attic there the compositors were relieved to hear

"Nor war nor battle sound,"

and

"The waiting world was still;"

so that even the leading editor relaxed from his gravity, and the "In-General" man from his more serious views, and the Daily the next morning wished

everybody a merry Christmas with even more unction, and resolved that in coming years it would have a supplement large enough to contain all the good wishes. So away again to the houses of confectioners who had given the children candy,—to Miss Simonds's house, because she had been so good to them in school,—to the palaces of millionnaires who had prayed for these children with tears if the children only knew it,—to Dr. Frothingham's in Summer Street, I remember, where we stopped because the Boston Association of Ministers met here, and out on Dover Street Bridge, that the poor chairmender might hear our carols sung once more before he heard them better sung in another world where nothing needs mending.

“King of glory, king of peace!”

“Hear the song, and see the Star!”

“Welcome be thou, heavenly King!”

“Was not Christ our Saviour?”

and all the others, rung out with order or without order, breaking the hush directly as the horses' bells were stilled, thrown into the air with all the gladness of childhood, selected sometimes as Harry happened to think best for the hearers, but more often as the jubilant and uncontrolled enthusiasm of the children bade them break out in the most joyous, least studied, and purely lyrical of all. O, we went to twenty places that night, I suppose! We went to

the grandest places in Boston, and we went to the meanest. Everywhere they wished us a merry Christmas, and we them. Everywhere a little crowd gathered round us, and then we dashed away far enough to gather quite another crowd; and then back, perhaps, not sorry to double on our steps if need were, and leaving every crowd with a happy thought of

“The star, the manger, and the Child!”

At nine we brought up at my house, D Street, three doors from the corner, and the children picked their very best for Polly and my six little girls to hear, and then for the first time we let them jump out and run in. Polly had some hot oysters for them, so that the frolic was crowned with a treat. There was a Christmas cake cut into sixteen pieces, which they took home to dream upon; and then hoods and muffs on again, and by ten o'clock, or a little after, we had all the girls and all the little ones at their homes. Four of the big boys, our two flankers and Harry's right and left hand men, begged that they might stay till the last moment. They could walk back from the stable, and “rather walk than not, indeed.” To which we assented, having gained parental permission, as we left younger sisters in their respective homes.

CHAPTER II.

LYCIDAS and I both thought, as we went into these modest houses, to leave the children, to say they had been good and to wish a "Merry Christmas" ourselves to fathers, mothers, and to guardian aunts, that the welcome of those homes was perhaps the best part of it all. Here was the great stout sailor-boy whom we had not seen since he came back from sea. He was a mere child when he left our school years on years ago, for the East, on board Perry's vessel, and had been round the world. Here was brave Mrs. Masury. I hadn't seen her since her mother died. "Indeed, Mr. Ingham, I got so used to watching then, that I cannot sleep well yet o' nights; I wish you knew some poor creature that wanted me to-night, if it were only in memory of Bethlehem." "You take a deal of trouble for the children," said Campbell, as he crushed my hand in his; "but you know they love you, and you know I would do as much for you and yours,"—which I knew was true. "What can I send to your children?" said Dalton, who was finishing sword-blades. (Ill wind was Fort Sumter, but it blew good to poor Dalton, whom it set up in the world with his sword-factory.) "Here's an old-fashioned tape-measure for the girl, and a Sheffield wimble for the boy. What, there is no boy? Let one of the girls have it then; it will count one more present

for her." And so he pressed his brown-paper parcel into my hand. From every house, though it were the humblest, a word of love, as sweet, in truth, as if we could have heard the voice of angels singing in the sky.

I bade Harry good-night; took Lycidas to his lodgings, and gave his wife my Christmas wishes and good-night; and, coming down to the sleigh again, gave way to the feeling which I think you will all understand, that this was not the time to stop, but just the time to begin. For the streets were stiller now, and the moon brighter than ever, if possible, and the blessings of these simple people and of the grand people, and of the very angels in heaven, who are not bound to the misery of using words when they have any thing worth saying, — all these wishes and blessings were round me, all the purity of the still winter night, and I didn't want to lose it all by going to bed to sleep. So I put the boys all together, where they could chatter, took one more brisk turn on the two avenues, and then, passing through Charles Street, I believe I was even thinking of Cambridge, I noticed the lights in Woodhull's house, and seeing they were up, thought I would make Fanny a midnight call. She came to the door herself. I asked if she were waiting for Santa Claus, but saw in a moment that I must not joke with her. She said she had hoped I was her husband. In a minute was one of those contrasts which make life, life.

God puts us into the world that we may try them and be tried by them. Poor Fanny's mother had been blocked up on the Springfield train as she was coming on to Christmas. The old lady had been chilled through, and was here in bed now with pneumonia. Both Fanny's children had been ailing when she came, and this morning the doctor had pronounced it scarlet-fever. Fanny had not undressed herself since Monday, nor slept, I thought, in the same time. So while we had been singing carols and wishing merry Christmas, the poor child had been waiting, and hoping that her husband or Edward, both of whom were on the tramp, would find for her and bring to her the model nurse, who had not yet appeared. But at midnight this unknown sister had not arrived, nor had either of the men returned. When I rang, Fanny had hoped I was one of them. Professional paragon, dear reader, are shy of scarlet-fever. I told the poor child that it was better as it was. I wrote a line for Sam Perry to take to his aunt, Mrs. Masury, in which I simply said: "Dear mamma, I have found the poor creature who wants you to-night. Come back in this carriage." I bade him take a hack at Gates's, where they were all up waiting for the assembly to be done at Papanti's. I sent him over to Albany Street; and really as I sat there trying to soothe Fanny, it seemed to me less time than it has taken to dictate this little story about her, before Mrs. Masury rang

gently, and I left them, having made Fanny promise that she would consecrate the day, which at that moment was born, by trusting God, by going to bed and going to sleep, knowing that her children were in much better hands than hers. As I passed out of the hall, the gaslight fell on a print of Correggio's Adoration, where Woodhull had himself written years before,

"Ut appareat iis qui in tenebris et umbra mortis positi sunt."

"Darkness and the shadow of death," indeed, and what light like the light and comfort such a woman as my Mary Masury brings!

And so, but for one of the accidents, as we call them, I should have dropped the boys at the corner of Dover Street, and gone home with my Christmas lesson.

But it happened, as we irreverently say, — it happened, as we crossed Park Square, so called from its being an irregular pentagon, of which one of the sides has been taken away, that I recognized a tall man, plodding across in the snow, head down, round-shouldered, stooping forward in walking, with his right shoulder higher than his left; and by these tokens I knew Tom Coram, prince among Boston princes. Not Thomas Coram that built the Foundling Hospital, though he was of Boston too; but he was longer ago. You must look for him in Addison's contribution to a supplement to the "Spectator," — the old "Spectator," I mean, not the Thursday

"Spectator," which is more recent. Not Thomas Coram, I say, but Tom Coram, who would build a hospital to-morrow, if you showed him the need, without waiting to die first, and always helps forward, as a prince should, whatever is princely, be it a statue at home, a school in Richmond, a newspaper in Florida, a church in Exeter, a steam-line to Liverpool, or a widow who wants a hundred dollars. I wished him a merry Christmas, and Mr. Howland, by a fine instinct, drew up the horses as I spoke. Coram shook hands; and, as it seldom happens that I have an empty carriage while he is on foot, I asked him if I might not see him home. He was glad to get in. We wrapped him up with spoils of the bear, the fox, and the bison, turned the horses' heads again, — five hours now since they started on this entangled errand of theirs, — and gave him his ride. "I was thinking of you at the moment," said Coram, — "thinking of old college times, of the mystery of language as unfolded by the Abbé Faria to Edmond Dantes in the depths of the Chateau d'If. I was wondering if you could teach me Japanese, if I asked you to a Christmas dinner." I laughed. Japan was really a novelty then, and I asked him since when he had been in correspondence with the sealed country. It seemed that their house at Shanghai had just sent across there their agents for establishing the first house in Edomo, in Japan, under the new treaty. Every thing looked promising, and the be-

ginnings were made for the branch which has since become Dot and Trevilyan there. Of this he had the first tidings in his letters by the mail of that afternoon. John Coram, his brother, had written to him, and had said that he enclosed for his amusement the Japanese bill of particulars, as it had been drawn out, on which they had founded their orders for the first assorted cargo ever to be sent from America to Edomo. Bill of particulars there was, stretching down the long tissue-paper in exquisite chirography. But by some freak of the "total depravity of things," the translated order for the assorted cargo was not there. John Coram, in his care to fold up the Japanese writing nicely, had left on his own desk at Shanghae the more intelligible English. "And so I must wait," said Tom philosophically, "till the next East India mail for my orders, certain that seven English houses have had less enthusiastic and philological correspondents than my brother."

I said I did not see that. That I could not teach him to speak the Taghalian dialects so well, that he could read them with facility before Saturday. But I could do a good deal better. Did he remember writing a note to old Jack Percival for me five years ago? No, he remembered no such thing; he knew Jack Percival, but never wrote a note to him in his life. Did he remember giving me fifty dollars, because I had taken a delicate boy, whom I was going to send to sea, and I was not quite satisfied with the

government outfit? No, he did not remember that, which was not strange, for that was a thing he was doing every day. "Well, I don't care how much you remember, but the boy about whom you wrote to Jack Percival, for whose mother's ease of mind you provided the half-hundred, is back again, — strong, straight, and well; what is more to the point, he had the whole charge of Perry's commissariat on shore at Yokohama, was honorably discharged out there, reads Japanese better than you read English; and if it will help you at all, he shall be here at your house at breakfast." For as I spoke we stopped at Coram's door. "Ingham," said Coram, "if you were not a parson, I should say you were romancing." "My child," said I, "I sometimes write a parable for the 'Atlantic;' but the words of my lips are verity, as all those of the Sandemanians. Go to bed; do not even dream of the Taghalian dialects; be sure that the Japanese interpreter will breakfast with you, and the next time you are in a scrape send to the nearest minister. George, tell your brother Ezra that Mr. Coram wishes him to breakfast here to-morrow morning at eight o'clock; don't forget the number, Pemberton Square, you know." "Yes, sir," said George; and Thomas Coram laughed, said "Merry Christmas," and we parted.

It was time we were all in bed, especially these boys. But glad enough am I as I write these words that the meeting of Coram set us back that dropped-

stitch in our night's journey. There was one more delay. We were sweeping by the Old State House, the boys singing again, "Carol, carol, Christians," as we dashed along the still streets, when I caught sight of Adams Todd, and he recognized me. He had heard us singing when we were at the "Advertiser" office. Todd is an old fellow-apprentice of mine,—and he is now, or rather was that night, chief pressman in the "Argus" office. I like the "Argus" people,—it was there that I was South American Editor, now many years ago, and they befriended me to this hour. Todd hailed me, and once more I stopped. "What sent you out from your warm steam-boiler?" "Steam-boiler, indeed," said Todd. "Two rivets loose,—steam-room full of steam,—police frightened,—neighborhood in a row,—and we had to put out the fire. She would have run a week without hurting a fly,—only a little puff in the street sometimes. But there we are, Ingham. We shall lose the early mail as it stands. Seventy-eight tokens to be worked now." They always talked largely of their edition at the "Argus." Saw it with many eyes, perhaps; but this time, I am sure, Todd spoke true. I caught his idea at once. In younger and more muscular times, Todd and I had worked the Adams press by that fly-wheel for full five minutes at a time, as a test of strength; and in my mind's eye, I saw that he was printing his paper at this moment

with relays of grinding stevedores. He said it was so. "But think of it to-night," said he. "It is Christmas eve, and not an Irishman to be hired, though one paid him ingots. Not a man can stand to grind ten minutes." I knew that very well from old experience, and I thanked him inwardly for not saying "the demnition grind," with Mantilini. "We cannot run the press half the time," said he; "and the men we have are giving out now. We shall lose all our carrier delivery." "Todd," said I, "is this a night to be talking of ingots, or hiring, or losing, or gaining? When will you learn that Love rules the court, the camp, and the 'Argus' office." And I wrote on the back of a letter to Campbell: "Come to the 'Argus' office, No. 2 Dasset's Alley, with seven men not afraid to work;" and I gave it to John and Sam, bade Howland take the boys to Campbell's house, — walked down with Todd to his office, — challenged him to take five minutes at the wheel, in memory of old times, — made the tired relays laugh as they saw us take hold; and then, — when I had cooled off, and put on my Cardigan, — met Campbell, with his seven sons of Anak, tumbling down the stairs, wondering what round of mercy the parson had found for them this time. I started home, knowing I should now have my "Argus" with my coffee.

CHAPTER III.

AND so I walked home. Better so, perhaps, after all, than in the lively sleigh, with the tinkling bells.

“It was a calm and silent night! —
Seven hundred years and fifty-three
Had Rome been growing up to might,
And now was queen of land and sea!
No sound was heard of clashing wars, —
Peace brooded o’er the hushed domain;
Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars
Held undisturbed their ancient reign
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!”

What an eternity it seemed since I started with those children singing carols. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary, Rome, Roman senators, Tiberius, Paul, Nero, Clement, Ephrem, Ambrose, and all the singers, — Vincent de Paul, and all the loving wonder-workers, Milton and Herbert and all the carol-writers, Luther and Knox and all the prophets, — what a world of people had been keeping Christmas with Sam Perry and Lycidas and Harry and me; and here were Yokohama and the Japanese, the “Daily Argus” and its ten million tokens and their readers, — poor Fanny Woodhull and her sick mother there, keeping Christmas too! For a finite world, these are a good many “waits” to be singing in one poor fellow’s ears on one Christmas-tide.

" 'Twas in the calm and silent night! —
The senator of haughty Rome,
Impatient urged his chariot's flight,
From lordly revel, rolling home.
Triumphal arches gleaming swell
His breast, with thoughts of boundless sway.
What reaked the *Roman* what befell
A paltry province far away,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

" Within that province far away
Went plodding home a weary boor;
A streak of light before him lay,
Fallen through a half-shut stable door
Across his path. He passed, — for naught
Told *what was going on within*;
How keen the stars, his only thought,
The air how calm and cold and thin,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!"

"Streak of light." Is there a light in Lycidas's room! They not in bed! That is making a night of it! Well, there are few hours of the day or night when I have not been in Lycidas's room, so I let myself in by the night-key he gave me, ran up the stairs, — it is a horrid seven-storied, first-class lodging-house. For my part I had as lief live in a steeple. Two flights I ran up, two steps at a time, — I was younger then than I am now, — pushed open the door which was ajar, and saw such a scene of confusion as I never saw in Mary's over-nice parlor before. Queer! I remember the first thing that I

saw was wrong was a great ball of white German worsted on the floor. Her basket was upset. A great Christmas-tree lay across the rug, quite too high for the room; a large sharp-pointed Spanish clasp-knife was by it, with which they had been lopping it; there were two immense baskets of white papered presents, both upset; but what frightened me most was the centre-table. Three or four handkerchiefs on it, — towels, napkins, I know not what, all brown and red and almost black with blood! I turned, heart-sick, to look into the bedroom, — and I really had a sense of relief when I saw somebody. Bad enough it was, however. Lycidas, but just now so strong and well, lay pale and exhausted on the bloody bed, with the clothing removed from his right thigh and leg, while over him bent Mary and Morton. I learned afterwards that poor Lycidas, while trimming the Christmas-tree, and talking merrily with Mary and Morton, — who, by good luck, had brought round his presents late, and was staying to tie on glass balls and apples, — had given himself a deep and dangerous wound with the point of the unlucky knife, and had lost a great deal of blood before the hemorrhage could be controlled. Just before I entered the stick tourniquet which Morton had improvised had slipped in poor Mary's unpractised hand, at the moment he was about to secure the bleeding artery, and the blood followed in such a gush as compelled him to give his whole attention to stopping its flow.

He only knew my entrance by the "Ah, Mr. Ingham," of the frightened Irish girl, who stood useless behind the head of the bed.

"O Fred," said Morton, without looking up, "I am glad you are here."

"And what can I do for you?"

"Some whiskey, — first of all."

"There are two bottles," said Mary, who was holding the candle, "in the cupboard behind his dressing-glass."

I took Bridget with me, struck a light in the dressing-room (how she blundered about the match), and found the cupboard door locked! Key doubtless in Mary's pocket, — probably in pocket of "another dress." I did not ask. Took my own bunch, willed tremendously that my account-book drawer key should govern the lock, and it did. If it had not, I should have put my fist through the panels. Bottle of bed-bug poison; bottle marked "bay rum;" another bottle with no mark; two bottles of Saratoga water. "Set them all on the floor, Bridget." A tall bottle of Cologne. Bottle marked in MS. What in the world is it? "Bring that candle, Bridget." "Eau distillée. Marron, Montreal." What in the world did Lycidas bring distilled water from Montreal for? And then Morton's clear voice in the other room, "As quick as you can, Fred." "Yes, in one moment. Put all these on the floor, Bridget." Here they are at last. "Bourbon whiskey." "Corkscrew, Bridget."

"Indade, sir, and where is it?" "Where? I don't know. Run down as quick as you can, and bring it. His wife cannot leave him." So Bridget ran, and the first I heard was the rattle as she pitched down the last six stairs of the first flight headlong. Let us hope she has not broken her leg. I meanwhile am driving a silver pronged fork into the Bourbon corks, and the blade of my own penknife on the other side.

"Now, Fred," from George within. (We all call Morton "George.") "Yes, in one moment," I replied. Penknife blade breaks off, fork pulls right out, two crumbs of cork come with it. Will that girl never come?

I turned round; I found a goblet on the wash-stand; I took Lycidas's heavy clothes-brush, and knocked off the neck of the bottle. Did you ever do it, reader, with one of those pressed glass bottles they make now? It smashed like a Prince Rupert's drop in my hand, crumbled into seventy pieces, — a nasty smell of whiskey on the floor, — and I, holding just the hard bottom of the thing with two large spikes running worthless up into the air. But I seized the goblet, poured into it what was left in the bottom, and carried it into Morton as quietly as I could. He bade me give Lycidas as much as he could swallow; then showed me how to substitute my thumb for his, and compress the great artery. When he was satisfied that he could trust me, he

began his work again, silently ; just speaking what must be said to that brave Mary, who seemed to have three hands because he needed them. When all was secure, he glanced at the ghastly white face, with beads of perspiration on the forehead and upper lip, laid his finger on the pulse, and said, " We will have a little more whiskey. No, Mary, you are overdone already ; let Fred bring it." The truth was that poor Mary was almost as white as Lycidas. She would not faint, — that was the only reason she did not, — and at the moment I wondered that she did not fall. I believe George and I were both expecting it, now the excitement was over. He called her Mary and me Fred, because we were all together every day of our lives. Bridget, you see, was still nowhere.

So I retired for my whiskey again, — to attack that other bottle. George whispered quickly as I went, " Bring enough, — bring the bottle." Did he want the bottle corked ? Would that Kelt ever come upstairs ? I passed the bell-rope as I went into the dressing-room, and rang as hard as I could ring. I took the other bottle, and bit steadily with my teeth at the cork, only, of course, to wrench the end of it off. George called me, and I stepped back. " No," said he, " bring your whiskey."

Mary had just rolled gently back on the floor. I went again in despair. But I heard Bridget's step this time. First flight, first passage ; second flight,

second passage. She ran in in triumph at length, with a *screw-driver*!

"No!" I whispered, — "no. The crooked thing you draw corks with." And I showed her the bottle again. "Find one somewhere, and don't come back without it." So she vanished for the second time.

"Frederic!" said Morton. I think he never called me so before. Should I risk the clothes-brush again? I opened Lycidas's own drawers, — papers, boxes, every thing in order, — not a sign of a tool.

"Frederic!" "Yes," I said. But why did I say "Yes"? "Father of Mercy, tell me what to do."

And my mazed eyes, dim with tears, — did you ever shed tears from excitement? — fell on an old razor-strop of those days of shaving, made by C. WHITTAKER, SHEFFIELD. The "Sheffield" stood in black letters out from the rest like a vision. They make corkscrews in Sheffield too. If this Whittaker had only made a corkscrew! And what is a "Sheffield wimble"?

Hand in my pocket, — brown paper parcel.

"Where are you, Frederic?" "Yes," said I, for the last time. Twine off! brown paper off! And I learned that the "Sheffield wimble" was one of those things whose name you never heard before, which people sell you in Thames Tunnel, where a hoof-cleaner, a gimlet, a screw-driver, and a *corkscrew* fold into one handle.

"Yes," said I, again. "Pop," said the cork. "Bubble, bubble, bubble," said the whiskey. Bottle in one hand, full tumbler in the other, I walked in. George poured half a tumblerful down Lycidas's throat that time. Nor do I dare say how much he poured down afterwards. I found that there was need of it, from what he said of the pulse, when it was all over. I guess Mary had some too.

This was the turning-point. He was exceedingly weak, and we sat by him in turn through the night, giving, at short intervals, stimulants and such food as he could easily swallow; for I remember Morton was very particular not to raise his head more than we could help. But there was no real danger after this.

As we turned away from the house on Christmas morning, — I to preach and he to visit his patients, — he said to me, "Did you make that whiskey?"

"No," said I, "but poor Dod Dalton had to furnish the corkscrew."

And I went down to the chapel to preach. The sermon had been lying ready at home on my desk, — and Polly had brought it round to me, — for there had been no time for me to go from Lycidas's home to D Street and to return. There was the text, all as it was the day before: —

"They helped every one his neighbor, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheneth with the hammer him that smote the anvil."

And there were the pat illustrations, as I had finished them yesterday; of the comfort Mary Magdalen gave Joanna, the court lady; and the comfort the court lady gave Mary Magdalen, after the mediator of a new covenant had mediated between them; how Simon the Cyrenian, and Joseph of Arimathea, and the beggar Bartimeus comforted each other, gave each other strength, common force, *com-fort*, when the One Life flowed in all their veins; how on board the ship the Tent-Maker proved to be Captain, and the Centurion learned his duty from his Prisoner, and how they "*All* came safe to shore," because the New Life was there. But as I preached, I caught Frye's eye. Frye is always critical; and I said to myself, "Frye would not take his illustrations from eighteen hundred years ago." And I saw dear old Dod Dalton trying to keep awake, and Campbell hard asleep after trying, and Jane Masury looking round to see if her mother did not come in; and Ezra Sheppard, looking, not so much at me, as at the window beside me, as if his thoughts were the other side of the world. And I said to them all, "O, if I could tell you, my friends, what every twelve hours of my life tells me, — of the way in which woman helps woman, and man helps man, when only the ice is broken, — how we are all rich so soon as we find out that we are all brothers, and how we are all in want, unless we can call at any moment for a brother's hand, — then I could make you un-

derstand something, in the lives you lead every day, of what the New Covenant, the New Commonwealth, the New Kingdom is to be."

But I did not dare tell Dod Dalton what Campbell had been doing for Todd, nor did I dare tell Campbell by what unconscious arts old Dod had been helping Lycidas. Perhaps the sermon would have been better had I done so.

But when we had our tree in the evening at home, I did tell all this story to Polly and the bairns, and I gave Alice her measuring-tape, — precious with a spot of Lycidas's blood, — and Bertha her Sheffield wimble. "Papa," said old Clara, who is the next child, "all the people gave presents, did not they, as they did in the picture in your study?"

"Yes," said I, "though they did not all know they were giving them."

"Why do they not give such presents every day?" said Clara.

"O child," I said, "it is only for thirty-six hours of the three hundred and sixty-five days, that all people remember that they are all brothers and sisters, and those are the hours that we call, therefore, Christmas eve and Christmas day."

"And when they always remember it," said Bertha, "it will be Christmas all the time! What fun!"

"What fun, to be sure; but Clara, what is in the picture?"

"Why an old woman has brought eggs to the baby

in the manger, and an old man has brought a sheep. I suppose they all brought what they had."

"I suppose those who came from Sharon brought roses," said Bertha. And Alice, who is eleven, and goes to the Lincoln School, and therefore knows every thing, said, "Yes, and the Damascus people brought Damascus wimbles."

"This is certain," said Polly, "that nobody tried to give a straw, but the straw, if he really gave it, carried a blessing."





JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER.







JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

THE COFFEE-STALL AND ITS KEEPER.

IN a screened and secluded corner of one of the many railway-bridges which span the streets of London, there could be seen, a few years ago, from five o'clock every morning until half-past eight, a tidily set out coffee-stall, consisting of a trestle and board, upon which stood two large tin cans, with a small fire of charcoal burning under each, so as to keep the coffee boiling during the early hours of the morning when the work-people were thronging into the city, on their way to their daily toil. The coffee-stall was a favorite one, for besides being under shelter, which was of great consequence upon rainy mornings, it was also in so private a niche that the customers taking their out-of-door breakfast were not too much exposed to notice; and more-

over, the coffee-stall keeper was a quiet man, who cared only to serve the busy workmen, without hindering them by any gossip. He was a tall, spare, elderly man, with a singularly solemn face, and a manner which was grave and secret. Nobody knew either his name or dwelling-place; unless it might be the policeman who strode past the coffee-stall every half-hour, and nodded familiarly to the solemn man behind it. There were very few who cared to make any inquiries about him; but those who did could only discover that he kept the furniture of his stall at a neighboring coffee-house, whither he wheeled his trestle and board and crockery every day, not later than half-past eight in the morning; after which he was wont to glide away with a soft footstep, and a mysterious and fugitive air, with many backward and sidelong glances, as if he dreaded observation, until he was lost among the crowds which thronged the streets. No one had ever had the persevering curiosity to track him all the way to his house, or to find out his other means of gaining a livelihood; but in general his stall was surrounded by customers, whom he served with silent seriousness, and who did not grudge to pay him his charge for the refreshing coffee he supplied to them.

For several years the crowd of work-people had paused by the coffee-stall under the railway-arch, when one morning, in a partial lull of his business,

the owner became suddenly aware of a pair of very bright dark eyes being fastened upon him and the slices of bread and butter on his board, with a gaze as hungry as that of a mouse which has been driven by famine into a trap. A thin and meagre face belonged to the eyes, which was half hidden by a mass of matted hair hanging over the forehead, and down the neck; the only covering which the head or neck had, for a tattered frock, scarcely fastened together with broken strings, was slipping down over the shivering shoulders of the little girl. Stooping down to a basket behind his stall, he caught sight of two bare little feet curling up from the damp pavement, as the child lifted up first one and then the other, and laid them one over another to gain a momentary feeling of warmth. Whoever the wretched child was, she did not speak; only at every steaming cupful which he poured out of his can, her dark eyes gleamed hungrily, and he could hear her smack her thin lips, as if in fancy she was tasting the warm and fragrant coffee.

"Oh, come now!" he said at last, when only one boy was left taking his breakfast leisurely, and he leaned over his stall to speak in a low and quiet tone, "why don't you go away, little girl? Come, come; you're staying too long, you know."

"I'm just going, sir," she answered, shrugging her small shoulders to draw her frock up higher about her neck; "only it's raining cats and dogs outside;

and mother's been away all night, and she took the key with her; and it's so nice to smell the coffee; and the police has left off worriting me while I've been here. He thinks I'm a customer taking my breakfast." And the child laughed a shrill little laugh of mockery at herself and the policeman.

"You've had no breakfast, I suppose," said the coffee-stall keeper, in the same low and confidential voice, and leaning over his stall till his face nearly touched the thin, sharp features of the child.

"No," she replied, coolly, "and I shall want my dinner dreadful bad afore I get it, I know. You don't often feel dreadful hungry, do you, sir? I'm not griped yet, you know; but afore I taste my dinner it'll be pretty bad, I tell you. Ah! very bad indeed!"

She turned away with a knowing nod, as much as to say she had one experience in life to which he was quite a stranger; but before she had gone half a dozen steps, she heard the quiet voice calling to her in rather louder tones, and in an instant she was back at the stall.

"Slip in here," said the owner, in a cautious whisper; "here's a little coffee left and a few crusts. There, you must never come again, you know. I never give to beggars; and if you'd begged, I'd have called the police. There: put your poor feet towards the fire. Now, aren't you comfortable?"

The child looked up with a face of intense satisfaction. She was seated upon an empty basket, with her feet near the pan of charcoal, and a cup of steaming coffee on her lap; but her mouth was too full for her to reply, except by a very deep nod, which expressed unbounded delight. The man was busy for a while packing up his crockery; but every now and then he stopped to look down upon her, and to shake his head gravely.

"What's your name?" he asked, at length; "but there, never mind! I don't care what it is. What's your name to do with me, I wonder?"

"It's Jessica," said the girl: "but mother and everybody calls me Jess. You'd be tired of being called Jess, if you was me. It's Jess here, and Jess there; and everybody wanting me to go errands. And they think nothing of giving me smacks, and kicks, and pinches. Look here!"

Whether her arms were black and blue from the cold, or from ill-usage, he could not tell; but he shook his head again seriously, and the child felt encouraged to go on.

"I wish I could stay here for ever and ever, just as I am!" she cried. "But you're going away, I know; and I'm never to come again, or you'll set the police on me!"

"Yes," said the coffee-stall keeper, very softly, and looking round to see if there were any other ragged children within sight; "if you'll promise

not to come again for a whole week, and not to tell anybody else, you may come once more. I'll give you one other treat. But you must be off now."

"I'm off, sir," she said, sharply; "but if you've a errand I could go on, I'd do it all right, I would. Let me carry some of your things."

"No, no," cried the man; "you run away, like a good girl; and mind, I'm not to see you again for a whole week."

"All right!" answered Jess, setting off down the rainy street at a quick run, as if to show her willing agreement to the bargain; while the coffee-stall keeper, with many a cautious glance around him, removed his stock-in-trade to the coffee-house near at hand, and was seen no more for the rest of the day in the neighborhood of the railway-bridge.



CHAPTER II.

JESSICA'S TEMPTATION.

JESSICA kept her part of the bargain faithfully; and though the solemn and silent man under the dark shadow of the bridge looked out for her every morning as he served his customers, he caught no glimpse of her wan face and thin little frame. But when the appointed time was finished, she presented

herself at the stall, with her hungry eyes fastened again upon the piles of buns and bread and butter, which were fast disappearing before the demands of the buyers. The business was at its height, and the famished child stood quietly on one side watching for the throng to melt away. But as soon as the nearest church clock had chimed eight, she drew a little nearer to the stall, and at a signal from its owner, she slipped between the trestles of his stand, and took up her former position on the empty basket. To his eyes she seemed even a little thinner, and certainly more ragged than before; and he laid a whole bun, a stale one which was left from yesterday's stock, upon her lap, as she lifted the cup of coffee to her lips with both her benumbed hands.

"What's your name?" she asked, looking up to him with her keen eyes.

"Why?" he answered, hesitatingly, as if he was reluctant to tell so much of himself; "my christened name is Daniel."

"And where do you live, Mr. Dan'el?" she inquired.

"Oh, come now!" he exclaimed; "if you're going to be impudent, you'd better march off. What business is it of yours where I live? I don't want to know where you live, I can tell you."

"I didn't mean no offence," said Jess, humbly; "only I thought I'd like to know where a good man

like you lived. Your're a very good man, aren't you, Mr. Dan'el?"

"I don't know," he answered, uneasily; "I'm afraid I'm not."

"Oh, but you are, you know," continued Jess. "You make good coffee; prime! And buns too! And I've been watching you hundreds of times afore you saw me, and the police leaves you alone, and never tells you to move on. Oh, yes! you must be a very good man."

Daniel sighed, and fidgeted about his crockery with a grave and occupied air, as if he were pondering over the child's notion of goodness. He made good coffee, and the police left him alone. It was quite true; yet still as he counted up the store of pence which had accumulated in his strong canvas bag, he sighed again still more heavily. He purposely let one of his pennies fall upon the muddy pavement, and went on counting the rest busily, while he furtively watched the little girl sitting at his feet. Without a shade of change upon her small face, she covered the penny with her foot, and drew it in carefully towards her, while she continued to chatter fluently to him. For a moment a feeling of pain shot a pang through Daniel's heart; and then he congratulated himself on having entrapped the young thief. It was time to be leaving now; but before he went he would make her move her bare foot, and disclose the penny con-

cealed beneath it, and then he would warn her never to venture near his stall again. This was her gratitude he thought; he had given her two breakfasts and more kindness than he had shown to any fellow-creature for many a long year; and at the first chance, the young jade turned upon him, and robbed him! He was brooding over it painfully in his mind, when Jessica's uplifted face changed suddenly, and a dark flush crept over her pale cheeks, and the tears started to her eyes. She stooped down, and picking up the coin from amongst the mud, she rubbed it bright and clean upon her rags and laid it upon the stall close to his hand, but without speaking a word. Daniel looked down upon her solemnly and searchingly.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Please, Mr. Daniel," she answered, "it dropped, and you didn't hear it."

"Jess," he said, sternly, "tell me all about it."

"Oh please," she sobbed, "I never had a penny of my very own but once; and it rolled close to my foot, and you didn't see it; and I hid it up sharp; and then I thought how kind you'd been, and how good the coffee and buns are, and how you let me warm myself at your fire; and please, I couldn't keep the penny any longer. You'll never let me come again, I guess."

Daniel turned away for a minute, busying himself with putting his cups and saucers into the bas-

ket, while Jessica stood by trembling, with the large tears rolling slowly down her cheeks. The snug, dark corner with its warm fire of charcoal and its fragrant smell of coffee, had been a paradise to her for these two brief spans of time; but she had been guilty of the sin which would drive her from it. All beyond the railway arch, the streets stretched away, cold and dreary, with no friendly faces to meet hers, and no warm cups of coffee to refresh her; yet she was only lingering sorrowfully to hear the words spoken which should forbid her to return to this pleasant spot. Mr. Daniel turned round at last, and met her tearful gaze, with a look of strange emotion upon his own solemn face.

"Jess," he said, "I could never have done it myself. But you may come here every Wednesday morning, as this is a Wednesday, and there'll always be a cup of coffee for you."

She thought he meant that he could not have hidden the penny under his foot, and she went away a little saddened and subdued, notwithstanding her great delight in the expectation of such a treat every week; while Daniel pondering over the struggle that must have passed through her childish mind, went on his way from time to time shaking his head, and muttering to himself, "I couldn't have done it myself: I never could have done it myself."

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW DRESS.

WEEK after week, through the three last months of the year, Jessica appeared every Wednesday at the coffee-stall, and, after waiting patiently till the close of the breakfasting business, received her pittance from the charity of her new friend. After a while Daniel allowed her to carry some of his load to the coffee-house, but he never suffered her to follow him farther, and he was always particular to watch her out of sight before he turned off through the intricate mazes of the streets in the direction of his own home. Neither did he encourage her to ask him any more questions; and often but very few words passed between them during Jessica's breakfast time.

As to Jessica's home, she made no secret of it, and Daniel might have followed her any time he pleased. It was a single room, which had once been a hay-loft over the stable of an old inn, now in use for two or three donkeys, the property of costermongers dwelling in the court about it. The mode of entrance was by a wooden ladder, whose rungs were crazy and broken, and which led up through a trap-door in the floor of the loft. The interior of the home was as desolate and comfortless

as that of the stable below, with only a litter of straw for the bedding, and a few bricks and boards for the furniture. Every thing that could be pawned had disappeared long ago, and Jessica's mother often lamented that she could not thus dispose of her child. Yet Jessica was hardly a burden to her. It was a long time since she had taken any care to provide her with food or clothing, and the girl had to earn or beg for herself the meat which kept a scanty life within her. Jess was the drudge and errand-girl of the court; and what with being cuffed and beaten by her mother, and overworked and ill-used by her numerous employers, her life was a hard one. But now there was always Wednesday morning to count upon and look forward to; and by and by a second scene of amazed delight opened upon her.

Jessica had wandered far away from home in the early darkness of a winter's evening, after a violent outbreak of her drunken mother, and she was still sobbing now and then with long-drawn sobs of pain and weariness, when she saw, a little way before her, the tall, well-known figure of her friend Mr. Daniel. He was dressed in a suit of black, with a white neckcloth, and he was pacing with brisk yet measured steps along the lighted streets. Jessica felt afraid of speaking to him, but she followed at a little distance, until presently he stopped before the iron gates of a large building, and, unlocking them,

passed on to the arched doorway, and with a heavy key opened the folding-doors and entered in. The child stole after him, but paused for a few minutes, trembling upon the threshold, until the gleam of a light lit up within tempted her to venture a few steps forward, and to push a little way open an inner door, covered with crimson baize, only so far as to enable her to peep through at the inside. Then, growing bolder by degrees, she crept through herself, drawing the door to noiselessly behind her. The place was in partial gloom, but Daniel was kindling every gaslight, and each minute lit it up in more striking grandeur. She stood in a carpeted aisle, with high oaken pews on each side, almost as black as ebony. A gallery of the same dark old oak ran round the walls, resting upon massive pillars, behind one of which she was partly concealed, gazing with eager eyes at Daniel, as he mounted the pulpit steps and kindled the lights there, disclosing to her curious delight the glittering pipes of an organ behind it. Before long the slow and soft-footed chapel-keeper disappeared for a minute or two into a vestry; and Jessica, availing herself of his short absence, stole silently up under the shelter of the dark pews until she reached the steps of the organ loft, with its golden show. But at this moment Mr. Daniel appeared again, arrayed in a long gown of black serge; and as she stood spell-bound gazing at the strange appearance of her patron, his

eyes fell upon her, and he also was struck speechless for a minute, with an air of amazement and dismay upon his grave face.

"Come, now," he exclaimed, harshly, as soon as he could recover his presence of mind, "you must take yourself out of this. This isn't any place for such as you. It's for ladies and gentlemen; so you must run away sharp before anybody comes. How ever did you find your way here?"

He had come very close to her, and bent down to whisper in her ear, looking nervously round to the entrance all the time. Jessica's eager tongue was loosened.

"Mother beat me," she said, "and turned me into the streets, and I see you there, so I followed you up. I'll run away this minute, Mr. Daniel; but it's a nice place. What do the ladies and gentlemen do when they come here? Tell me, and I'll be off sharp."

"They come here to pray," whispered Daniel.

"What is pray?" asked Jessica.

"Bless the child!" cried Daniel, in perplexity. "Why, they kneel down in those pews; most of them sit, though; and the minister up in the pulpit tells God what they want."

Jessica gazed into his face with such an air of bewilderment that a faint smile crept over the se-date features of the pew-opener.

"What is a minister and God?" she said; "and

do ladies and gentlemen want any thing? I thought they'd every thing they wanted, Mr. Daniel."

"Oh!" cried Daniel, "you must be off, you know. They'll be coming in a minute, and they'd be shocked to see a ragged little heathen like you. This is the pulpit, where the minister stands and preaches to 'em; and there are the pews, where they sit to listen to him, or to go to sleep, maybe; and that's the organ to play music to their singing. There, I've told you every thing, and you must never come again, never."

"Mr. Daniel," said Jessica, "I don't know nothing about it. Isn't there a dark little corner somewhere that I could hide in?"

"No, no," interrupted Daniel, impatiently; "we couldn't do with such a little heathen, with no shoes or bonnet on. Come now, it's only a quarter to the time, and somebody will be here in a minute. Run away, do!"

Jessica retraced her steps slowly to the crimson door, casting many a longing look backwards; but Mr. Daniel stood at the end of the aisle, frowning upon her whenever she glanced behind. She gained the lobby at last, but already some one was approaching the chapel door, and beneath the lamp at the gate stood one of her natural enemies, a policeman. Her heart beat fast, but she was quick-witted, and in another instant she spied a place of concealment behind one of the doors, into which she

crept for safety until the path should be clear, and the policeman passed on upon his beat.

The congregation began to arrive quickly. She heard the rustling of silk dresses, and she could see the gentlemen and ladies pass by the niche between the door and the post. Once she ventured to stretch out a thin little finger and touch a velvet mantle as the wearer of it swept by, but no one caught her in the act, or suspected her presence behind the door. Mr. Daniel, she could see, was very busy ushering the people to their seats; but there was a startled look lingering upon his face, and every now and then he peered anxiously into the outer gloom and darkness, and even once called to the policeman to ask if he had seen a ragged child hanging about. After a while the organ began to sound, and Jessica, crouching down in her hiding-place, listened entranced to the sweet music. She could not tell what made her cry, but the tears came so rapidly that it was of no use to rub the corners of her eyes with her hard knuckles; so she lay down upon the ground, and buried her face in her hands, and wept without restraint. When the singing was over, she could only catch a confused sound of a voice speaking. The lobby was empty now, and the crimson doors closed. The policeman, also, had walked on. This was the moment to escape. She raised herself from the ground with a feeling of weariness and sorrow; and thinking

sadly of the light, and warmth, and music that were within the closed doors, she stepped out into the cold and darkness of the streets, and loitered homewards with a heavy heart.



CHAPTER IV.

PEEPS INTO FAIRY-LAND.

It was not the last time that Jessica concealed herself behind the baize-covered door. She could not overcome the urgent desire to enjoy again and again the secret and perilous pleasure ; and Sunday after Sunday she watched in the dark streets for the moment when she could slip in unseen. She soon learned the exact time when Daniel would be occupied in lighting up, before the policeman would take up his station at the entrance, and again, the very minute at which it would be wise and safe to take her departure. Sometimes the child laughed noiselessly to herself, until she shook with suppressed merriment, as she saw Daniel standing unconsciously in the lobby, with his solemn face and grave air, to receive the congregation, much as he faced his customers at the coffee-stall. She learned to know the minister by sight, the tall, thin, pale gentleman, who passed through a side door, with his head bent as if in deep

thought, while two little girls, about her own age, followed him with sedate yet pleasant faces. Jessica took a great interest in the minister's children. The younger one was fair, and the elder was about as tall as herself, and had eyes and hair as dark; but oh, how cared for, how plainly waited on by tender hands! Sometimes, when they were gone by, she would close her eyes, and wonder what they would do in one of the high black pews inside, where there was no place for a ragged, barefooted girl like her; and now and then her wonderings almost ended in a sob, which she was compelled to stifle.

It was an untold relief to Daniel that Jessica did not ply him with questions, as he feared, when she came for breakfast every Wednesday morning; but she was too shrewd and cunning for that. She wished him to forget that she had ever been there, and by and by her wish was accomplished, and Daniel was no longer uneasy, while he was lighting the lamps, with the dread of seeing the child's wild face starting up before him.

But the light evenings of summer-time were drawing near apace, and Jessica foresaw with dismay that her Sunday treats would soon be over. The risk of discovery increased every week, for the sun was later and later in setting, and there would be no chance in creeping in and out unseen in the broad daylight. Already it needed both watchfulness and alertness to dart in at the right moment in

the gray twilight ; but still she could not give it up ; and if it had not been for the fear of offending Mr. Daniel, she would have resolved upon going until she was found out. They could not punish her very much for standing in the lobby of a chapel.

Jessica was found out, however, before the dusky evenings were quite gone. It happened one night that the minister's children, coming early to the chapel, saw a small tattered figure, bareheaded and barefooted, dart swiftly up the steps before them and disappear within the lobby. They paused and looked at one another, and then, hand in hand, their hearts beating quickly, and the color coming and going on their faces, they followed this strange new member of their father's congregation. The pew-opener was nowhere to be seen, but their quick eyes detected the prints of the wet little feet which had trodden the clean pavement before them, and in an instant they discovered Jessica crouching behind the door.

"Let us call Daniel Standring," said Winny, the younger child, clinging to her sister ; but she had spoken aloud, and Jessica overheard her, and before they could stir a step she stood before them with an earnest and imploring face.

"Oh, don't have me drove away," she cried ; "I'm a very poor little girl, and it's all the pleasure I've got. I've seen you lots of times, with that tall gentleman as stoops, and I didn't think you'd have me

drove away. I don't do any harm behind the door, and if Mr. Daniel finds me out, he won't give me any more coffee."

"Little girl," said the elder child, in a composed and demure voice, "we don't mean to be unkind to you; but what do you come here for, and why do you hide yourself behind the door?"

"I like to hear the music," answered Jessica, "and I want to find out what pray is, and the minister, and God. I know it's only for ladies and gentlemen, and fine children like you; but I'd like to go inside just for once, and see what you do."

"You shall come with us into our pew," cried Winny, in an eager and impulsive tone; but Jane laid her hand upon her outstretched arm, with a glance at Jessica's ragged clothes and matted hair. It was a question difficult enough to perplex them. The little outcast was plainly too dirty and neglected for them to invite her to sit side by side with them in their crimson-lined pew, and no poor people attended the chapel with whom she could have a seat. But Winny, with flushed cheeks and indignant eyes, looked reproachfully at her elder sister.

"Jane," she said, opening her Testament and turning over the leaves hurriedly, "this was papa's text a little while ago. 'For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay

clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou there in a good place; and say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?' If we don't take this little girl into our pew, we 'have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons.'"

"I don't know what to do," answered Jane, sighing; "the Bible seems plain; but I'm sure papa would not like it. Let us ask the chapel-keeper."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Jessica, "don't let Mr. Daniel catch me here. I won't come again, indeed; and I'll promise not to try to find out about God and the minister, if you'll only let me go."

"But, little girl," said Jane, in a sweet but grave manner, "we ought to teach you about God, if you don't know him. Our papa is the minister, and if you'll come with us, we'll ask him what we must do."

"Will Mr. Daniel see me?" asked Jessica.

"Nobody but papa is in the vestry," answered Jane, "and he'll tell us all, you and us, what we ought to do. You'll not be afraid of him, will you?"

"No," said Jessica, cheerfully, following the minister's children as they led her along the side of the chapel towards the vestry.

"He is not such a terrible personage," said Winny, looking round encouragingly, as Jane tapped softly at the door, and they heard a voice saying "Come in."

CHAPTER V.

A NEW WORLD OPENS.

THE minister was sitting in an easy-chair before a comfortable fire, with a hymn-book in his hand, which he closed as the three children appeared in the open doorway. Jessica had seen his pale and thoughtful face many a time from her hiding-place, but she had never met the keen, earnest, searching gaze of his eyes, which seemed to pierce through all her wretchedness and misery, and to read at once the whole history of her desolate life. But before her eyelids could droop, or she could drop a reverential courtesy, the minister's face kindled with such a glow of pitying tenderness and compassion, as fastened her eyes upon him, and gave her new heart and courage. His children ran to him, leaving Jessica upon the mat at the door, and with eager voices and gestures, told him the difficulty they were in.

"Come here, little girl," he said, and Jessica walked across the carpeted floor till she stood right before him, with folded hands, and eyes that looked frankly into his.

"What is your name, my child?" he asked.

"Jessica," she answered.

"Jessica," he repeated, with a smile; "that is a strange name."

"Mother used to play 'Jessica' at the theatre, sir," she said, "and I used to be a fairy in the pantomime, till I grew too tall and ugly. If I'm pretty when I grow up, mother says I shall play too; but I've a long time to wait. Are you the minister, sir?"

"Yes," he answered, smiling again.

"What is a minister?" she inquired.

"A servant!" he replied, looking away thoughtfully into the red embers of the fire.

"Papa!" cried Jane and Winny, in tones of astonishment; but Jessica gazed steadily at the minister, who was now looking back again into her bright eyes.

"Please, sir, whose servant are you?" she asked.

"The servant of God and of man," he answered, solemnly. "Jessica, I am your servant."

The child shook her head, and laughed shrilly as she gazed round the room, and at the handsome clothing of the minister's daughters, while she drew her rags closer about her, and shivered a little, as if she felt a sting of the east wind, which was blowing keenly through the streets. The sound of her shrill, childish laugh made the minister's heart ache, and the tears burn under his eyelids.

"Who is God?" asked the child. "When mother's in a good temper, sometimes she says 'God bless me!' Do you know him, please, minister?"

But before there was time to answer, the door

into the chapel was opened, and Daniel stood upon the threshold. At first he stared blandly forwards, but then his grave face grew ghastly pale, and he laid his hand upon the door to support himself until he could recover his speech and senses. Jessica also looked about her, scared and irresolute, as if anxious to run away or to hide herself. The minister was the first to speak.

"Jessica," he said, "there is a place close under my pulpit where you shall sit, and where I can see you all the time. Be a good girl and listen, and you will hear something about God. Standring, put this little one in front of the pews by the pulpit steps."

But before she could believe it for very gladness, Jessica found herself inside the chapel, facing the glittering organ, from which a sweet strain of music was sounding. Not far from her Jane and Winny were peeping over the front of their pew, with friendly smiles and glances. It was evident that the minister's elder daughter was anxious about her behavior, and she made energetic signs to her when to stand up and when to kneel; but Winny was content with smiling at her, whenever her head rose above the top of the pew. Jessica was happy, but not in the least abashed. The ladies and gentlemen were not at all unlike those whom she had often seen when she was a fairy at the theatre; and very soon her attention was engrossed by the minister,

whose eyes often fell upon her, as she gazed eagerly, with uplifted face, upon him. She could scarcely understand a word of what he said, but she liked the tones of his voice, and the tender pity of his face as he looked down upon her. Daniel hovered about a good deal, with an air of uneasiness and displeasure, but she was unconscious of his presence. Jessica was intent upon finding out what a minister and God were.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST PRAYER.

WHEN the service was ended, the minister descended the pulpit steps, just as Daniel was about to hurry Jessica away, and taking her by the hand in the face of all the congregation, he led her into the vestry, whither Jane and Winny quickly followed them. He was fatigued with the services of the day, and his pale face was paler than ever, as he placed Jessica before his chair, into which he threw himself with an air of exhaustion; but bowing his head upon his hands, he said in a low but clear tone, "Lord, these are the lambs of thy flock. Help me to feed thy lambs!"

"Children," he said, with a smile upon his weary face, "it is no easy thing to know God. But this one thing we know, that he is our Father—my Father and your Father, Jessica. He loves you, and cares for you more than I do for my little girls here."

He smiled at them and they at him, with an expression which Jessica felt and understood, though it made her sad. She trembled a little, and the minister's ear caught the sound of a faint though bitter sob.

"I never had any father," she said, sorrowfully.

"God is your Father," he answered, very gently; "he knows all about you, because he is present everywhere. We cannot see him, but we have only to speak, and he hears us, and we may ask him for whatever we want."

"Will he let me speak to him, as well as these fine children that are clean, and have got nice clothes?" asked Jessica, glancing anxiously at her muddy feet, and her soiled and tattered frock.

"Yes," said the minister, smiling, yet sighing at the same time; "you may ask him this moment for what you want."

Jessica gazed round the room with large, wide-open eyes, as if she were seeking to see God; but then she shut her eyelids tightly, and bending her head upon her hands, as she had seen the minister do, she said, "O God! I want to know about you."

And please pay Mr. Dan'el for all the warm coffee he's give me."

Jane and Winny listened with faces of unutterable amazement; but the tears stood in the minister's eyes, and he added "Amen" to Jessica's first prayer.



CHAPTER VII.

HARD QUESTIONS.

DANIEL had no opportunity for speaking to Jessica; for, after waiting until the minister left the vestry, he found that she had gone away by the side entrance. He had to wait, therefore, until Wednesday morning, and the sight of her pinched little face was welcome to him, when he saw it looking wistfully over the coffee-stall. Yet he had made up his mind to forbid her to come again, and to threaten her with the policeman if he ever caught her at the chapel, where for the future he intended to keep a sharper lookout. But before he could speak, Jess had slipped under the stall, and taken her old seat upon the up-turned basket.

"Mr. Dan'el," she said, "has God paid you for my sups of coffee yet?"

"Paid me?" he repeated, "God? No."

"Well he will," she answered, nodding her head

sagely; "don't you be afraid for your money, Mr. Dan'el; I've asked him a many times, and the minister says he's sure to do it."

"Jess," said Daniel, sternly, "have you been and told the minister about my coffee-stall?"

"No," she answered, with a beaming smile, "but I've told God lots and lots of times since Sunday, and he's sure to pay in a day or two."

"Jess," continued Daniel, more gently, "you're a sharp little girl, I see; and now mind, I'm going to trust you. You're never to say a word about me or my coffee-stall; because the folks at our chapel are very grand, and might think it low and mean of me to keep a coffee-stall. Very likely they'd say I mustn't be chapel-keeper any longer, and I should lose a deal of money."

"Why do you keep the stall then?" asked Jessica.

"Don't you see what a many pennies I get every morning?" he said, shaking his canvas bag. "I get a good deal of money that way in a year."

"What do you want such a deal of money for?" she inquired; "do you give it to God?"

Daniel did not answer, but the question went to his heart like a sword thrust. What did he want so much money for? He thought of his one bare and solitary room, where he lodged alone, a good way from the railway-bridge, with very few comforts in it, but containing a desk, strongly and securely

fastened, in which was his savings-bank book and his receipts for money put out at interest, and a bag of sovereigns, for which he had been toiling and slaving both on Sundays and week-days. He could not remember giving any thing away, except the dregs of the coffee and the stale buns, for which Jessica was asking God to pay him. He coughed, and cleared his throat, and rubbed his eyes; and then, with nervous and hesitating fingers, he took a penny from his bag, and slipped it into Jessica's hand.

"No, no, Mr. Dan'el," she said; "I don't want you to give me any of your pennies. I want God to pay you."

"Ay, he'll pay me," muttered Daniel; "there'll be a day of reckoning by and by."

"Does God have reckoning days?" asked Jessica. "I used to like reckoning days when I was a fairy."

"Ay, ay," he answered, "but there's few folks like God's reckoning days."

"But you'll be glad, won't you?" she said.

Daniel bade her get on with her breakfast, and then he turned over in his mind the thoughts which her questions had awakened. Conscience told him he would not be glad to meet God's reckoning day.

"Mr. Dan'el," said Jessica, when they were about to separate, and he would not take back his gift of a penny, "if you wouldn't mind I'd like to come and buy a cup of coffee to-morrow, like a customer, you

know : and I won't let out a word about the stall to the minister next Sunday, don't you be afraid."

She tied the penny carefully into a corner of her rags, and with a cheerful smile upon her thin face, she glided from under the shadow of the bridge, and was soon lost to Daniel's sight.



CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

WHEN Jessica came to the street into which the court where she lived opened, she saw an unusual degree of excitement among the inhabitants, a group of whom were gathered about a tall gentleman, whom she recognized in an instant to be the minister. She elbowed her way through the midst of them, and the minister's face brightened as she presented herself before him. He followed her up the low entry, across the squalid court, through the stable, empty of the donkeys just then, up the creaking rounds of the ladder, and into the miserable loft, where the tiles were falling in, and the broken window-panes were stuffed with rags and paper. Near to the old rusty stove, which served as a grate when there was any fire, there was a short board laid across some bricks, and upon this the

minister took his seat, while Jessica sat upon the floor before him.

"Jessica," he said, sadly, "is this where you live?"

"Yes," she answered; "but we'd a nicer room than this when I was a fairy, and mother played at the theatre; we shall be better off when I'm grown up, if I'm pretty enough to play like her."

"My child," he said, "I'm come to ask your mother to let you go to school in a pleasant place down in the country. Will she let you go?"

"No," answered Jessica: "mother says she'll never let me learn to read, or go to church; she says it would make me good for nothing. But please, sir, she doesn't know any thing about your church, it's such a long way off, and she hasn't found me out yet. She always gets very drunk of a Sunday."

The child spoke simply, and as if all she said was a matter of course; but the minister shuddered, and he looked through the broken window to the little patch of gloomy sky overhead.

"What can I do?" he cried mournfully, as though speaking to himself.

"Nothing, please, sir," said Jessica, "only let me come to hear you of a Sunday, and tell me about God. If you was to give me fine clothes like your little girls, mother'd only pawn them for gin. You can't do any thing more for me"

"Where is your mother?" he asked.

"Out on a spree," said Jessica, "and she won't be home for a day or two. She'd not hearken to you, sir. There's the missionary came, and she pushed him down the ladder, till he was nearly killed. They used to call mother the Vixen at the theatre, and nobody durst say a word to her."

The minister was silent for some minutes, thinking painful thoughts, for his eyes seemed to darken as he looked round the miserable room, and his face wore an air of sorrow and disappointment. At last he spoke again.

"Who is Mr. Daniel, Jessica?" he inquired.

"Oh," she said, cunningly, "he's only a friend of mine as gives me sups of coffee. You don't know all the folks in London, sir!"

"No," he answered, smiling; "but does he keep a coffee-stall?"

Jessica nodded her head, but did not trust herself to speak.

"How much does a cup of coffee cost?" asked the minister.

"A full cup's a penny," she answered, promptly; "but you can have half a cup; and there are half-penny and penny buns."

"Good coffee and buns?" he said, with another smile.

"Prime," replied Jessica, smacking her lips.

"Well," continued the minister, "tell your friend

to give you a full cup of coffee and a penny bun every morning, and I'll pay for them as often as he chooses to come to me for the money."

Jessica's face beamed with delight, but in an instant it clouded over as she recollected Daniel's secret, and her lips quivered as she spoke her disappointed reply.

"Please, sir," she said, "I'm sure he couldn't come; oh! he couldn't. It's such a long way, and Mr. Daniel has plenty of customers. No, he never would come to you for the money."

"Jessica," he answered, "I will tell you what I will do. I will trust you with a shilling every Sunday, if you'll promise to give it to your friend the very first time you see him. I shall be sure to know if you cheat me." And the keen, piercing eyes of the minister looked down into Jessica's, and once more the tender and pitying smile returned to his face.

Then the minister carefully descended the ladder, followed by Jessica's bare and nimble feet, and she led him by the nearest way into one of the great thoroughfares of the city, where he said good-by to her, adding, "God bless you, my child," in a tone which sank into Jessica's heart. He had put a silver sixpence into her hand to provide for her breakfast the next three mornings, and, with a feeling of being very rich, she returned to her miserable home.

The next morning Jessica presented herself

proudly as a customer at Daniel's stall, and paid over the sixpence in advance. He felt a little troubled as he heard her story, lest the minister should endeavor to find him out; but he could not refuse to let the child come daily for her comfortable breakfast. If he was detected, he would promise to give up his coffee-stall rather than offend the great people of the chapel; but unless he was, it would be foolish of him to lose the money it brought in week after week.



CHAPTER IX.

JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER ANSWERED.

EVERY Sunday evening the barefooted and bare-headed child might be seen advancing confidently up to the chapel, where rich and fashionable people worshipped God; but before taking her place she arrayed herself in a little cloak and bonnet, which had once belonged to the minister's elder daughter, and which was kept with Daniel's serge gown, so that she presented a somewhat more respectable appearance in the eyes of the congregation. The minister had no listener more attentive, and he would have missed the pinched, earnest little face if it were not to be seen in the seat just under the

pulpit. At the close of each service he spoke to her for a minute or two in his vestry, often saying no more than a single sentence, for the day's labor had wearied him. The shilling, which was always lying upon the chimney-piece, placed there by Jane and Winny in turns, was immediately handed over, according to promise, to Daniel as she left the chapel, and so Jessica's breakfast was provided for her week after week.

But at last there came a Sunday evening when the minister, going up into his pulpit, did miss the wistful, hungry face, and the shilling lay unclaimed upon the vestry chimney-piece. Daniel looked out for her anxiously every morning, but no Jessica glided into his secluded corner, to sit beside him with her breakfast on her lap, and with a number of strange questions to ask. He felt her absence more keenly than he could have expected. The child was nothing to him, he kept saying to himself; and yet he felt that she was something, and that he could not help being uneasy and anxious about her. Why had he never inquired where she lived? The minister knew, and for a minute Daniel thought he would go and ask him, but that might awaken suspicion. How could he account for so much anxiety, when he was supposed only to know of her absence from chapel one Sunday evening? It would be running a risk, and, after all, Jessica was nothing to him. So he went home and looked over his savings-

bank book, and counted his money, and he found to his satisfaction that he had gathered together nearly four hundred pounds, and was adding more every week.

But when upon the next Sunday Jessica's seat was again empty, the anxiety of the solemn chapel-keeper overcame his prudence and his fears. The minister had retired to his vestry, and was standing with his arm resting upon the chimney-piece, and his eyes fixed upon the unclaimed shilling, which Winny had laid there before the service, when there was a tap at the door, and Daniel entered with a respectful but hesitating air.

"Well, Standring?" said the minister, questioningly.

"Sir," he said, "I'm uncomfortable about that little girl; and I know you've been once to see after her; she told me about it; and so I make bold to ask you where she lives, and I'll see what's become of her."

"Right, Standring," answered the minister; "I am troubled about the child, and so are my little girls. I thought of going myself, but my time is very much occupied just now."

"I'll go, sir," replied Daniel, promptly; and, after receiving the necessary information about Jessica's home, he put out the lights, locked the door and turned towards his lonely lodgings.

But though it was getting late upon Sunday even-

ing, and Jessica's home was a long way distant, Daniel found that his anxiety would not suffer him to return to his solitary room. It was of no use to reason with himself, as he stood at the corner of the street, feeling perplexed and troubled, and promising his conscience that he would go the very first thing in the morning after he shut up his coffee-stall. In the dim, dusky light, as the summer evening drew to a close, he fancied he could see Jessica's thin figure and wan face gliding on before him, and turning round from time to time to see if he were following. It was only fancy, and he laughed a little at himself; but the laugh was husky, and there was a choking sensation in his throat, so he buttoned his Sunday coat over his breast, where his silver watch and chain hung temptingly, and started off at a rapid pace for the centre of the city.

It was not quite dark when he reached the court, and stumbled up the narrow entry leading to it; but Daniel did hesitate when he opened the stable-door, and looked into a blank, black space in which he could discern nothing. He thought he had better retreat while he could do so safely; but as he still stood with his hand upon the rusty latch, he heard a faint, small voice through the nicks of the unceiled boarding above his head.

"Our Father," said the little voice, "please to send somebody to me, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

"I'm here, Jess," cried Daniel, with a sudden bound of his heart, such as he had not felt for years, and which almost took away his breath as he peered into the darkness, until at last he discerned dimly the ladder which led up into the loft.

Very cautiously, but with an eagerness which surprised himself, he climbed up the creaking rounds of the ladder and entered the dismal room, where the child was lying in desolate darkness. Fortunately he had put his box of matches into his pocket, and the end of a wax candle, with which he kindled the lamps, and in another minute a gleam of light shone upon Jessica's white features. She was stretched upon a scanty litter of straw under the slanting roof where the tiles had not fallen off, with her poor rags for her only covering; but as her eyes looked up into Daniel's face bending over her, a bright smile of joy sparkled in them.

"Oh!" she cried, gladly, but in a feeble voice, "it's Mr. Dan'el! Has God told you to come here, Mr. Daniel?"

"Yes," said Daniel, kneeling beside her, taking her wasted hand in his, and parting the matted hair upon her damp forehead.

"What did he say to you, Mr. Dan'el?" said Jessica.

"He told me I was a great sinner," replied Daniel. "He told me I loved a little bit of dirty money better than a poor, friendless, helpless child,

whom he had sent to me to see if I would do her a little good for his sake. He looked at me, or the minister did, through and through and he said, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' And I could answer him nothing, Jess. He was come to a reckoning with me, and I could not say a word to him."

"Aren't you a good man, Mr. Dan'el?" whispered Jessica.

"No, I'm a wicked sinner," he cried, while the tears rolled down his solemn face. "I've been constant at God's house, but only to get money; I've been steady and industrious, but only to get money; and now God looks at me, and he says, 'Thou fool!' Oh, Jess, Jess! You're more fit for heaven than I ever was in my life."

"Why don't you ask him to make you good?" asked the child.

"I can't," he said. "I've been kneeling down Sunday after Sunday when the minister's been praying, but all the time I was thinking how rich some of the carriage people were. I've been loving money and worshipping money all along, and I've nearly let you die rather than run the risk of losing part of my earnings. I'm a very sinful man."

"But you know what the minister often says," murmured Jessica. "'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'"

"I've heard it so often that I don't feel it," said Daniel. "I used to like to hear the minister say it, but now it goes in at one ear and out of the other. My heart is very hard, Jessica."

By the feeble glimmer of the candle Daniel saw Jessica's wistful eyes fixed upon him with a sad and loving glance; and then she lifted up her weak hand to her face, and laid it over her closed eyelids, and her feverish lips moved slowly.

"God," she said, "please to make Mr. Dan'el's heart soft. Amen."

She did not speak again, nor Daniel, for some time. He took off his Sunday coat and laid it over the tiny, shivering frame, which was shaking with cold even in the summer evening; and as he did so he remembered the words which the Lord says he will pronounce at the last day of reckoning, "Forasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Daniel Standring felt his heart turning with love to the Saviour, and he bowed his head upon his hands, and cried in the depths of his contrite spirit, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

CHAPTER X.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THERE was no coffee-stall opened under the railway arch the following morning, and Daniel's regular customers stood amazed as they drew near the empty corner, where they were accustomed to get their early breakfast. It would have astonished them still more if they could have seen how he was occupied in the miserable loft. He had intrusted a friendly woman out of the court to buy food and fuel, and all night long he had watched beside Jessica, who was light-headed and delirious, but in the wanderings of her thoughts and words often spoke to God, and prayed for her Mr. Dan'el. The neighbor informed him that the child's mother had gone off some days before, fearing that she was ill of some infectious fever, and that she, alone, had taken a little care of her from time to time. As soon as the morning came he sent for a doctor, and, after receiving permission from him, he wrapped the poor deserted Jessica in his coat, and bearing her tenderly in his arms down the ladder, he carried her to a cab, which the neighbor brought to the entrance of the court. It was to no other than his own solitary home that he had resolved to take her; and when the mistress of the lodgings stood at her door with her arms a-kimbo, to forbid the admission of

the wretched and neglected child, her tongue was silenced by the gleam of a half-sovereign, which Daniel slipped into the palm of her hard hand.

By that afternoon's post the minister received the following letter : —

"REVEREND SIR, — If you will condescend to enter under my humble roof, you will have the pleasure of seeing little Jessica, who is at the point of death, unless God in his mercy restores her. Hoping you will excuse this liberty, as I cannot leave the child, I remain with duty,

" Your respectful servant,

" D. STANDRING.

" P.S. Jessica desires her best love and duty to Miss Jane and Winny."

The minister laid aside the book he was reading, and without any delay started off for his chapel-keeper's dwelling. There was Jessica lying restfully upon Daniel's bed, but the pinched features were deadly pale, and the sunken eyes shone with a waning light. She was too feeble to turn her head when the door opened, and he paused for a minute, looking at her and at Daniel, who, seated at the head of the bed, was turning over the papers in his desk, and reckoning up once more the savings of his lifetime. But when the minister advanced into the middle of the room, Jessica's white cheeks flushed into a deep red.

"Oh, minister!" she cried, "God has given me every thing I wanted except paying Mr. Dan'el for the coffee he used to give me."

"Ah! but God has paid me over and over again," said Daniel, rising to receive the minister. "He's given me my own soul in exchange for it. Let me make bold to speak to you this once, sir. You're a very learned man, and a great preacher, and many people flock to hear you till I'm hard put to it to find seats for them at times; but all the while hearkening to you every blessed Sabbath, I was losing my soul, and you never once said to me, though you saw me scores and scores of times, 'Standring, are you a saved man?'"

"Standring," said the minister, in a tone of great distress and regret, "I always took it for granted that you were a Christian."

"Ah," continued Daniel, thoughtfully, "but God wanted somebody to ask me that question, and he did not find anybody in the congregation, so he sent this poor little lass to me. Well, I don't mind telling now, even if I lose the place; but for a long time, nigh upon ten years, I've kept a coffee-stall on week-days in the city, and cleared, one week with another, about ten shillings: but I was afraid the chapel-wardens wouldn't approve of the coffee business, as low, so I kept it a close secret, and always shut up early of a morning. It's me that sold Jessica her cup of coffee, which you paid for, sir."

"There's no harm in it, my good fellow," said the minister, kindly; "you need make no secret of it."

"Well," resumed Daniel, "the questions this poor little creature has asked me have gone quicker and deeper down to my conscience than all your sermons, if I may make so free as to say it. She's come often and often of a morning, and looked into my face with those dear eyes of hers, and said, 'Don't you love Jesus Christ, Mr. Dan'el?' 'Doesn't it make you feel very glad that God is your Father, Mr. Dan'el?' 'Are we getting nearer heaven every day, Mr. Dan'el?' And one day she says, 'Are you going to give all your money to God, Mr. Dan'el?' Ah, that question made me think indeed, and it's never been answered till this day. While I've been sitting beside the bed here, I've counted up all my savings: £397 17s. it is; and I've said, 'Lord, it is all thine; and I'd give every penny of it rather than lose the child, if it be thy blessed will to spare her life.'"

Daniel's voice quavered at the last words, and his face sank upon the pillow where Jessica's feeble and motionless head lay. There was a very sweet yet surprised smile upon her face, and she lifted her wasted fingers to rest upon the bowed head beside her, while she shut her eyes and shaded them with her other weak hand.

"Our Father," she said, in a faint whisper which still reached the ears of the minister and the beadle,

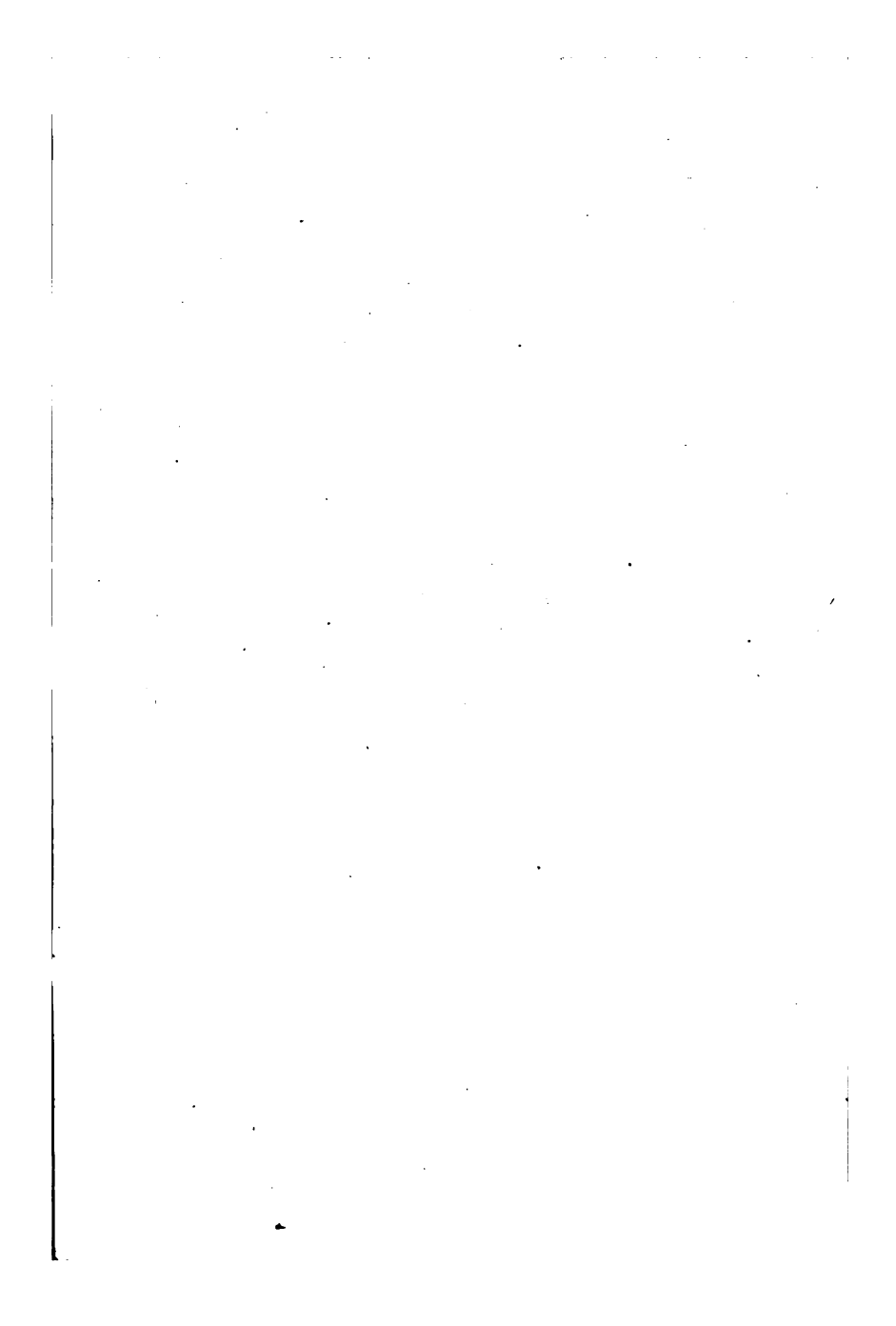
"I asked you to let me come home to heaven; but if Mr. Dan'el wants me, please to let me stay a little longer. Amen."

For some minutes after Jessie's prayer there was a deep and unbroken silence in the room, Daniel still hiding his face upon the pillow, and the minister standing beside them with bowed head and closed eyes, as if he also were praying. When he looked up again at the forsaken and desolate child, he saw that her feeble hand had fallen from her face, which looked full of rest and peace, while her breath came faintly but regularly through her parted lips. He took her little hand into his own with a pang of fear and grief; but instead of the mortal chillness of death he felt the pleasant warmth and moisture of life. He touched Daniel's shoulder, and as he lifted up his head in sudden alarm, he whispered to him, "The child is not dead, but is only asleep."

Before Jessica was fully recovered, Daniel rented a little house for himself and his adopted daughter to dwell in. He made many inquiries after her mother, but she never appeared again in her old haunts, and he was well pleased that there was nobody to interfere with his charge of Jessica. When Jessica grew strong enough, many a cheerful walk had they together, in the early mornings, as they wended their way to the railway bridge, where the little girl took her place behind the stall, and soon learned to serve the daily customers; and many a happy day was

spent in helping to sweep and dust the chapel, into which she had crept so secretly at first, her great delight being to attend to the pulpit and the vestry, and the pew where the minister's children sat, while Daniel and the woman he employed cleaned the rest of the building. Many a Sunday also did the minister in his pulpit, and his little daughters in their pew, and Daniel treading softly about the aisles, as their glance fell upon Jessica's eager, earnest, happy face, think of the first time they saw her sitting amongst the congregation, and of Jessica's first prayer.





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